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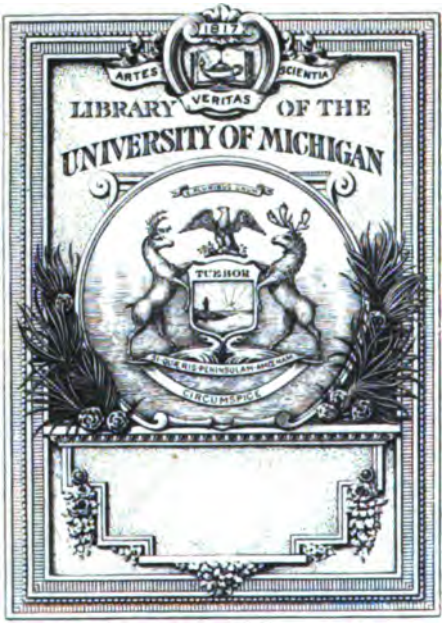
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SUMMARY OF EACH DISCOURSE, NOTES, &c.

BY THE REV. T. S. HUGHES, B.D.

VOL. V.

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ON

THE CHIEF ARTICLES OF IT

CONTAINED IN

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I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

SERMONS.

SUMMARY OF SERMON I.

HEBREWS, CHAP. III.—VERSE 12.

If the causes of all the sin and mischief in the world were carefully sought, we should find the chief to be infidelity; either total or gradual: hence the use of dissuading men from it.

That infidelity is a sinful distemper of the heart, appears by divers express testimonies of Scripture, and good reasons grounded thereon: this illustrated. But the sinfulness will appear more fully by a consideration of its nature and ingredients; its causes; its properties and adjuncts; its effects and consequences.

I. In its nature it involves an affected blindness and ignorance of the most noble and useful truths; a bad use of reason; disregard of God's providence; abuse of his grace; bad opinions of him, and bad affections towards him: this fully shown.

II. With regard to its causes: 1. It commonly proceeds from negligence, drowsy carelessness, or a *spirit of slumber* with regard to religious matters. 2. From sloth, which indisposes men to undergo the fatigue of seriously attending to the doctrine proposed, of examining its grounds, and of weighing the reasons to believe it, &c. 3. From stupidity or dulness of apprehension not natural, contracted by voluntary indisposi-

tions and defects; arising from the mists of prejudice, steams of lust and passion, &c. 4. From bad judgment, corrupted by prejudicated notions and partial inclination to falsehood. 5. From perverseness of will, which hinders men from entertaining notions disagreeable to their fond or froward humor; they are a faithless, because a perverse generation. 6. From hardness of heart, which is so often represented as an obstruction to belief; which hindered Pharaoh from hearkening to God's word. 7. Of kin to such perverseness of heart is that squeamish delicacy and niceness of humor, which will not let men entertain or savor any thing, anywise seeming hard or harsh to them, if they cannot presently comprehend all that is said, or if they can frame any cavil, or little exception to it: affected with this were the Apostles themselves in their minority. 8. With such a disposition is connected a want of love to truth; the which if a man have not, he cannot well entertain such notions as the gospel propounds, being nowise grateful to carnal sense, &c. 9. A grand cause of infidelity is pride, which interposes various bars to the admission of Christian truth, filling a man with vanity and an affectation of seeming wise above others, &c. contrary to the prime notions of Christianity, which all tend to debase human conceit: this topic enlarged on. 10. Another spring of infidelity is pusillanimity, or want of good resolution and courage; for Christianity is a warfare, &c. 11. Infidelity also arises from sturdiness, fierceness, untamed wildness of spirit: 12. Also from blind zeal grounded on prejudice, disposing men to adhere to that which they have been addicted to. 13. Infidelity issues from corruption of mind by any kind of brutish lust, irregular passion, or bad habit: faith and conscience are twins, inseparable from each other: if a man be covetous, he can hardly submit to that heavenly law which forbids us to *treasure up treasures on earth:* if ambitious, he will not approve that which teaches all kinds of humility, &c. 14. In fine, from

what spirit infidelity proceeds we may see by the principles, commonly with it espoused; and by its patrons; all which do rankly savor of baseness and ill-nature: this topic enlarged on.

III. Farther, the naughtiness of infidelity will appear by considering its effects and consequences; which are plainly a deluge of all mischiefs and outrages: for faith being removed, together with it all conscience goes; no virtue can remain; nothing rests to encourage men in what is good, or restrain them from evil, &c. The consideration of which ills hath engaged statesmen in every commonwealth to support some kind of faith, as necessary to public order, traffic, and peace among men.

An infidel that hath any wit, might be persuaded for his own interest, safety, and pleasure, to cherish faith in others.

But it may be said, is there such a thing as infidelity in Christendom? are we not all Christians? all baptised into the faith, and professors of it?

This may be said: but if we consider better, we shall find ground more than enough for this discourse; and that infidelity has a larger territory than we suppose: for to pass over swarms of atheistical apostates, many infidels lurk under the mask of Christian profession. It is not the name, or badges of religion that make a Christian, any more than the cowl makes a monk, or the beard a philosopher: there may be a creed in the mouth, when there is no faith in the heart: if no works be shown, no faith is to be granted: concluding observations on this head,

I Believe, &c.

SERMON I.

OF THE EVIL AND UNREASONABLENESS OF INFIDELITY.

HEBREWS, CHAP. III.—VERSE 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.

If the causes of all the sin and all the mischief in the world were carefully sought, we should find the chief of all to be infidelity; either total or gradual. Wherefore to dehort and dissuade from it is a very profitable design; and this, with God's assistance, I shall endeavor from these words; in which two particulars naturally do offer themselves to our observation; an assertion implied, that infidelity is a sinful distemper of heart; and a duty recommended, that we be careful to void or correct that distemper: of these to declare the one, and to press the other, shall be the scope of my discourse.

That infidelity is a sinful distemper of heart appeareth by divers express testimonies of Scripture, and by many good reasons grounded thereon.

It is by our Saviour in terms called sin: 'when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,—of sin, because they believe not in me:' and, 'If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin:' and, 'If ye were blind, ye should not have had sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin abideth.' What sin? that

of infidelity, for which they were culpable, having such powerful means and arguments to believe imparted to them, without due effect.

It hath a condemnation grounded thereon; 'He,' saith our Saviour, 'that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God:' but condemnation ever doth suppose faultiness.

It hath sore punishment denounced thereto; 'God,' saith St. Paul, 'shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness;' and, our Lord, saith he, at his coming to judgment, will 'take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;' whence among those, who 'have their part in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, the fearful, and unbelievers' (that is, they who fear to profess, or refuse to believe the Christian doctrine) are reckoned in the first place; which implieth infidelity to be a heinous sin.

It is also such, because it is a transgression of a principal law, or divine command; 'This,' saith St. John, 'is ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, the command of him, That we should believe;' this, saith our Lord, is τὸ ἔργον τοῦ Θεοῦ, the signal work of God, (which God requireth of us,) that 'ye believe on him, whom he hath sent:' that was a duty which our Lord and his Apostles chiefly did teach, enjoin, and press; wherefore correspondently infidelity is a great sin; according to St. John's notion, that sin is ἀνομία, 'the transgression of a law.'

But the sinfulness of infidelity will appear more fully by considering its nature and ingredients; its causes; its properties and adjuncts; its effects and consequences.'

I. In its nature it doth involve an affected blindness and ignorance of the noblest and most useful truths; a bad use of reason, and most culpable imprudence; disregard of God's providence, or despite thereto; abuse of his grace; bad opinions of him, and bad affections toward him; for

God in exceeding goodness and kindness to mankind hath proposed a doctrine, in itself 'faithful and worthy of all acceptation,' containing most excellent truths instructive of our mind and directive of our practice, toward attainment of salvation

and eternal felicity; special overtures of mercy and grace most needful to us in our state of sinful guilt, of weakness, of wretchedness; high encouragements and rich promises of reward for obedience: such a doctrine, with all its benefits, infidelity doth reject, 'defeating the counsel of God,' crossing his earnest desires of our welfare, 'despising his goodness and patience.'

To this doctrine God hath yielded manifold clear attestations, declaring it to proceed from himself; ancient presignifications and predictions; audible voices and visible apparitions from heaven, innumerable miraculous works, providence concurring to the maintenance and propagation of it against most powerful oppositions and disadvantages: but all these testimonies infidelity slighteth, not fearing to give their author the lie, which wicked boldness St. John chargeth on it; 'He,' saith the Apostle, 'that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the testimony that God gave of his Son.'

Many plain arguments, sufficient to convince our minds, and win our belief, God hath furnished; the dictates of natural conscience, the testimony of experience, the records of history, the consent of the best and wisest men, do all conspire to prove the truth, to recommend the usefulness of this doctrine; but infidelity will not regard, will not weigh, will not yield to reason.

God by his providence doth offer means and motives inducing to belief, by the promulgation of his gospel, and exhortation of his ministers: but all such methods infidelity doth void and frustrate; 'thrusting away the word, turning away the ear from the truth, letting the seed fall beside us, casting away the law of the Lord of hosts;' in effect (as those in Job) 'saying to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowlege of thy ways.'

God by his grace 'doth shine on our hearts,' doth attract our wills to compliance with his will, doth excite our affections to relish his truth: but infidelity doth 'resist his Spirit,' doth quench the heavenly light, doth smother all the suggestions and motions of divine grace within us.

What God asserteth, infidelity denieth, questioning his veracity; what God commandeth, infidelity doth not approve,

contesting his wisdom; what God promiseth, infidelity will not confide in, distrusting his fidelity, or his power: such is its behavior (so injurious, so rude, so foolish) toward God, and his truth; this briefly is its nature manifestly involving great pravity, iniquity, and impiety.

II. The causes and sources from whence it springeth (touched in Scripture, and obvious to experience) are those which follow.

1. It commonly doth proceed from negligence, or drowsy inobservance and carelessness; when men being possessed with a 'spirit of slumber,' or being amused with secular entertainments, do not mind the concerns of their soul, or regard the means by God's merciful care presented for their conversion; being in regard to religious matters of Gallio's humor, 'caring for none of those things:' thus, when the king in the gospel sent to invite persons to his wedding feast, it is said, Οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον, they 'being careless, or not regarding it, went their ways, one to his field, another to his trade.' Of such the Apostle to the Hebrews saith, 'How shall we escape, τοιαύτης ἀμελήσαντες σωτηρίας, who regard not so great salvation,' exhibited to us? Of such Wisdom complaineth; 'I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.'—'No man:' the greatest part indeed of men are on this account infidels, for that being wholly taken up in pursuit of worldly affairs and divertisements, in amassing of wealth, in driving on projects of ambition, in enjoying sensual pleasures, in gratifying their fancy and humor with vain curiosities or sports, they can hardly lend an ear to instruction; so they become unacquainted with the notions of Christian doctrine; the which to them are as 'the seed falling by the way side,' which those 'fowls of the air' do snatch and devour before it sinketh down into the earth, or doth come under consideration. Hence is unbelief commonly termed not hearing God's voice, not hearkening to God's word, the din of worldly business rendering men deaf to divine suggestions.

2. Another source of infidelity is sloth, which indisposeth men to undergo the fatigue of seriously attending to the doctrine propounded, of examining its grounds, of weighing the reasons inducing to believe; whence at first hearing, if the

notions hap not to hit their fancy, they do slight it before they fully understand it, or know its grounds; thence at least they must needs fail of a firm and steady belief, the which can alone be founded on a clear apprehension of the matter, and perception of its agreeableness to reason: so when the Athenians did hear St. Paul declaring the grand points of faith, somewhat in his discourse uncouth to their conceit falling from him, some of them did scorn, others did neglect his doctrine; 'some mocked; others said, We will hear thee again of this matter;' so Agrippa was 'almost persuaded to be a Christian,' but had not the industry to prosecute his inquiry, till he arrived to a full satisfaction. A solid faith (with clear understanding and firm persuasion) doth indeed, no less than any science, require sedulous and persevering study; so that as a man can never be learned, who will not be studious; so a sluggard cannot prove a good believer.

3. Infidelity doth arise from stupidity, or dullness of apprehension, (I mean not that which is natural; for any man in his senses, how low soever otherwise in parts or improvements, is capable to understand the Christian doctrine, and to perceive reason sufficient to convince him of its truth; but) contracted by voluntary indispositions and defects; a stupidity rising from mists of prejudice, from steams of lust and passion, from rust grown on the mind by want of exercising it in observing and comparing things; whence men cannot apprehend the clearest notions plainly represented to them, nor discern the force of arguments, however evident and cogent; but are like those wizards in Job, who 'meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noonday, as in the night.'

This is that which is so often charged on the Jews as cause of their infidelity; who 'did hear but not understand, and did see but not perceive; because their heart was gross, and their ears were dull of hearing, and their eyes were closed;' this is that πώρωσις καρδίας, that numbness of heart, which is represented as the common obstruction to the perception and admission of our Lord's doctrine: this our Lord blamed in his own disciples, when he rebuked them thus; 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' Of this the Apostle doth complain, telling the Hebrews that they were un-

capable of improvement in knowlege, because they were *νωθροὶ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς*, dull of hearing for want of skill and use, 'not having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil:' there is indeed to a sound and robust faith required a good perspicacy of apprehension, a penetrancy of judgment, a vigor and quickness of mind, grounded in the purity of our faculties, and confirmed by exercise of them in consideration of spiritual things.

4. Another cause of infidelity is a bad judgment; corrupted with prejudicate notions, and partial inclinations to falsehood. Men are apt to entertain prejudices favorable to their natural appetites and humors, to their lusts, to their present interests; dictating to them, that wealth, dignity, fame, pleasure, ease, are things most desirable, and necessary ingredients of happiness; so that it is a sad thing in any case to want them: all men have strong inclinations biassing them toward such things; it is a hard thing to shake off such prejudices, and to check such inclinations; it is therefore not easy to entertain a doctrine representing such things indifferent, obliging us sometimes to reject them, always to be moderate in the pursuit and enjoyment of them: wherefore infidelity will naturally spring up in a mind not cleansed from those corruptions of judgment.

5. Another source of infidelity is perverseness of will, which hindereth men from entertaining notions disagreeable to their fond or froward humor: *ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη*, 'O faithless and perverse generation!' those epithets are well coupled, for he that is perverse will be faithless; in proportion to the one the other bad quality will prevail. 'The weapons of the apostolical warfare (against the infidel world) were,' as St. Paul telleth us, 'mighty to the casting down of strong holds:' so it was; and the Apostles, by their discourse and demeanor, effectually did force many a strong fortress to surrender: but the will of some men is an impregnable bulwark against all batteries of discourse; they are so invincibly stubborn, as to hold out against the clearest evidence and mightiest force of reason: if they do not like what you say, if it cross any humor of theirs, be it clear as day, be it firm as an adamant, they will not admit it; you shall not persuade them, though you do persuade them. Such was the temper of the Jews,

whom St. Stephen therefore calleth 'a stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears;' who although they did hear the most winning discourse that ever was uttered, although they saw the most admirable works that ever were performed, yet would they not yield to the doctrine; the mean garb of the persons teaching it, the spirituality of its design, the strict goodness of its precepts, and the like considerations, not sorting with their fancies and desires; they hoping for a Messias arrayed with gay appearances of external grandeur and splendor, whose chief work it should be to settle their nation in a state of worldly prosperity and glory.

6. This is that hardness of heart, which is so often represented as an obstruction of belief; this hindered Pharaoh, notwithstanding all those mighty works performed before him, from hearkening to God's word, and regarding the mischiefs threatened to come on him for his disobedience; 'I will not,' said he, 'let Israel go;' his will was his reason, which no persuasion, no judgment could subdue: this was the cause of that monstrous infidelity in the Israelites, which baffled all the methods which God used to persuade and convert them; 'Notwithstanding,' it is said, 'they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God:' whence that exhortation to them; 'To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' And to obduration the disbelief of the gospel on the Apostles' preaching is in like manner ascribed; St. Paul, it is said in the Acts, 'went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God: but divers were hardened, and believed not:' and 'Exhort one another daily,' saith the Apostle, 'lest any of you be hardened (in unbelief) through the deceitfulness of sin.'

7. Of kin to that perverseness of heart is that squeamish delicacy and niceness of humor, which will not let men entertain or savor any thing, anywise seeming hard or harsh to them, if they cannot presently comprehend all that is said, if they can frame any cavil or little exception against it, if every scruple be not voided, if any thing be required distasteful to their sense; they are offended, and their faith is choked; you must,

to satisfy them, 'speak to them smooth things,' which nowise grate on their conceit or pleasure: so when our Lord discoursed somewhat mysteriously, representing himself in the figure of heavenly bread (typified by the manna of old) given for the world, to sustain men in life; 'Many of his disciples, hearing this, said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it?' and 'from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him:' this is that which is called being 'scandalised at the word, and stumbling at it;' concerning which our Saviour saith, 'Blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me.'

In regard to this weakness, the Apostles were fain in their instructions to use prudent dispensation, proposing only to some persons the most easy points of doctrine, they not being able to digest such as were more tough and difficult: 'I have,' saith St. Paul, 'fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it—for ye are yet carnal;' and, 'Ye,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'are such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.'

Such were even the Apostles themselves in their minority; 'not savoring the things of God;' being offended at our Lord's discourses, when he spake to them of suffering; and with his condition, when he entered into it.

8. With these dispositions is connected a want of love to truth; the which if a man hath not, he cannot well entertain such notions as the gospel propoundeth, being nowise grateful to carnal sense and appetite: this cause St. Paul doth assign of the Pagan doctors falling into so gross errors and vices, 'because they did not like to retain God in their knowlege,' and of men's revolting from Christian truth to antichristian imposture—'because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved: for which cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:' nothing indeed, but an impartial and ingenuous love of truth (overbalancing all corrupt prejudices and affections) can engage a man heartily to embrace this holy and pure doctrine, can preserve a man in a firm adherence thereto.

9. A grand cause of infidelity is pride, the which doth interpose various bars to the admission of Christian truth; for before a man can believe, πᾶν ὕψωμα, 'every height (every towering

imagination and conceit) that exalteth itself against the knowlege of God, must be cast down.'

Pride fills a man with vanity and an affectation of seeming wise in special manner above others, thereby disposing him to maintain paradoxes, and to nauseate common truths received and believed by the generality of mankind.

A proud man is ever averse from renouncing his prejudices and correcting his errors; doing which implieth a confession of weakness, ignorance, and folly, consequently depresseth him in his own conceit, and seemeth to impair that credit which he had with others from his wisdom; neither of which events he is able to endure.

He that is wise in his own conceit, will hug that conceit, and thence is uncapable to learn; 'there is,' saith Solomon, 'more hope of a fool than of him;' and he that affecteth the praise of men, will not easily part with it for the sake of truth; whence, 'How,' saith our Lord, 'can ye believe, who receive glory one of another?' how can ye, retaining such affections, be disposed to avow yourselves to have been ignorants and fools, whenas ye were reputed for learned and wise? how can ye endure to become novices, who did pass for doctors? how can ye allow yourselves so blind and weak, as to have been deceived in your former judgment of things?

He that is conceited of his own wisdom, strength of parts, and improvement in knowlege, cannot submit his mind to notions which he cannot easily comprehend and penetrate; he will scorn to have his understanding baffled or puzzled by sublime mysteries of faith; he will not easily yield any thing too high for his wit to reach, or too knotty for him to unloose: 'How can these things be?' what reason can there be for this? I cannot see how this can be true; this point is not intelligible: so he treateth the dictates of faith; not considering the feebleness and shallowness of his own reason: hence 'not many wise men according to the flesh,' (or who were conceited of their own wisdom, relying on their natural faculties and means of knowlege,) not many scribes, or 'disputers of this world,' did embrace the Christian truth, it appearing absurd and foolish to them; it being needful that a man should 'be a fool, that he might, in this regard, become wise.'

The prime notions of Christianity do also tend to the debasing human conceit, and to the exclusion of all glorying in ourselves; referring all to the praise and glory of God, ascribing all to his pure mercy, bounty, and grace; it representeth all men heinous sinners, void of all worth and merit, lapsed into a wretched state, altogether impotent, forlorn, and destitute of ability to help or relieve themselves; such notions proud hearts cannot digest; they cannot like to avow their infirmities, their defects, their wants, their vileness, and unworthiness; their distresses and miseries; they cannot endure to be intirely and absolutely beholden to favor and mercy for their happiness: such was the case of the Jews; who could not believe, because, 'going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not submit to the righteousness of God.' *Dextra mihi Deus*, every proud man would say, with the profane Mezentius.

Christianity doth also much disparage and vilify those things, for which men are apt much to prize and pride themselves; it maketh small account of wealth, of honor, of power, of wit, of secular wisdom, of any human excellency or worldly advantage: it levelleth the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, the philosopher and idiot in spiritual regards; yea far preferreth the meanest and simplest person, endued with true piety, above the mightiest and wealthiest, who is devoid thereof: in the eye of it, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor;' whatever he be in worldly regard or state: this a proud man cannot support; to be divested of his imaginary privileges, to be thrown down from his perch of eminency, to be set below those whom he so much despiseth, is insupportable to his spirit.

The practice of Christianity doth also expose men to the scorn and censure of profane men; who for their own solace, out of envy, revenge, diabolical spite, are apt to deride and reproach all conscientious and resolute practisers of their duty, as silly, credulous, superstitious, humorous, morose, sullen folks: so that he that will be good, must resolve to bear that usage from them; like David; 'I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in my own sight:' but with these sufferings a

proud heart cannot comport; it goeth too much against the grain thereof to be contemned.

Christianity doth also indispensably require duties, point-blank opposite to pride; it placeth humility among its chief virtues, as a foundation of piety; it enjoineth us to think meanly of ourselves, to disclaim our own worth and desert, to have no complacency or confidence in any thing belonging to us; not to aim at high things; to waive the regard and praise of men; it exacteth from us a sense of our vileness, remorse and contrition for our sins, with humble confession of them, self-condemnation and abhorrence; it chargeth us to bear injuries and affronts patiently, without grievous resentment, without seeking or so much as wishing any revenge; to undergo disgraces, crosses, disasters, willingly and gladly; it obligeth us 'to prefer others before ourselves,' sitting down in the lowest room, yielding to the meanest persons: to all which sorts of duty a proud mind hath an irreconcilable antipathy.

A proud man, that is big and swollen with haughty conceit and stomach, cannot stoop down so low, cannot shrink in himself so much, as to 'enter into the strait gate, or to walk in the narrow way, which leadeth to life:' he will be apt to contemn wisdom and instruction.

Shall I, will he say, such a gallant as I, so accomplished in worth, so flourishing in dignity, so plump with wealth, so highly regarded and renowned among men, thus pitifully crouch and sneak? shall I deign to avow such beggarly notions, or bend to such homely duties? shall I disown my perfections, or forego my advantages? shall I profess myself to have been a despicable worm, a villainous caitiff, a sorry wretch? shall I suffer myself to be flouted as a timorous religionist, a scrupulous precisian, a conscientious sneaksby? shall I lie down at the foot of mercy, puling in sorrow, whining in confession, bewailing my guilt, and craving pardon? shall I allow any man better or happier than myself? shall I receive those into consortship or equality of rank with me, who appear so much my inferiors? shall I be misused and trampled on, without doing myself right, and making them smart who shall presume to wrong or cross me? shall I be content to be nobody in the world? So the proud

man will say in his heart, contesting the doctrines and duties of our religion, and so disputing himself into infidelity.

10. Another spring of infidelity is pusillanimity, or want of good resolution and courage; δειλοὶ καὶ ἄπιστοι, 'cowards and infidels,' are well joined among those who are devoted to the fiery lake; for timorous men dare not believe such doctrines, which engage them on undertaking difficult, laborious, dangerous enterprises; on undergoing hardships, pains, wants, disgraces; on encountering those mighty and fierce enemies, with whom every faithful man continually doth wage war.

They have not the heart to look the world in the face, when it frowneth at them, menacing persecution and disgrace; but 'when affliction ariseth for the word, they are presently scandalised.' It is said in the gospel, that 'no man spake freely of our Lord for fear of the Jews:' as it so did smother the profession and muzzle the mouth, so it doth often stifle faith itself, and quell the heart, men fearing to harbor in their very thoughts points dangerous and discountenanced by worldly power.

They have not also courage to adventure a combat with their own flesh, and 'those lusts, which war against their souls;' to set on correcting their temper, curbing their appetites, bridling their passions; keeping flesh and blood in order; on pulling out their right eyes, and cutting off their right hands, and crucifying their members; it daunteth them to attempt duties so harsh and painful.

They have not the resolution to withstand and repel temptations, and in so doing to 'wrestle with principalities and powers;' to resist and baffle the 'strong one.' To part with their ease, their wealth, their pleasure, their credit, their accommodations of life, is a thing, any thought whereof doth quash all inclination in a faint and fearful heart of complying with the Christian doctrine.

Christianity is a warfare; living after its rules is called 'fighting the good fight of faith;' every true Christian is a 'good soldier of Jesus Christ;' the state of Christians must be sometimes like that of the Apostles, who were 'troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears:' great courage therefore, and undaunted resolution, are required toward

the undertaking this religion, and the persisting in it cordially.

11. Infidelity doth also rise from sturdiness, fierceness, wildness, untamed animosity of spirit; so that a man will not endure to have his will crossed, to be under any law, to be curbed from any thing which he is prone to affect.

12. Blind zeal, grounded on prejudice, disposing men to stiff adherence unto that which they have once been addicted and accustomed to, is in the Scripture frequently represented as a cause of infidelity. So the Jews being 'filled with zeal, contradicted the things spoken by St. Paul;' flying at his doctrine, without weighing it: so 'by instinct of zeal' did St. Paul himself persecute the church; being 'exceedingly zealous for the traditions delivered by his fathers.'

In fine, infidelity doth issue from corruption of mind by any kind of brutish lust, any irregular passion, any bad inclination or habit: any such evil disposition of soul doth obstruct the admission or entertainment of that doctrine, which doth prohibit and check it; doth condemn it, and brand it with infamy; doth denounce punishment and woe to it: whence 'men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith;' and 'men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth,' are attributes well conjoined by St. Paul, as commonly jumping together in practice; and 'to them,' saith he, 'that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled:' such pollution is not only consequent to, and connected with, but antecedent to infidelity, blinding the mind so as not to see the truth, and perverting the will so as not to close with it.

Faith and a good conscience are twins, born together, inseparable from each other, living and dying together; for the first, faith is (as St. Peter telleth us) nothing else but 'the stipulation of a good conscience,' fully persuaded that Christianity is true, and firmly resolving to comply with it: and, 'The end (or drift and purport) 'of the evangelical doctrine is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned:' whence those apostolical precepts, 'to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience;' and, 'to hold faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning the

faith have made shipwreck:' a man void of good conscience will not embark in Christianity; and having laid good conscience aside, he soon will make shipwreck of faith, by apostasy from it. Resolute indulgence to any one lust is apt to produce this effect.

If a man be covetous, he can 'hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven,' or submit to that heavenly law, which forbiddeth us 'to treasure up treasures on earth;' which chargeth us to be liberal 'in communication of our goods;' so as to 'give unto every one that asketh;' which in some cases requireth to 'sell all our goods, and to give them to the poor;' which declareth that 'whosoever doth not bid farewell to all that he hath, cannot be a disciple of Christ;' which ascribeth 'happiness to the poor,' and denounceth 'woe to the rich, who have their consolation here.' Preach such doctrine to a covetous person, and as the young gentleman who 'had great possessions,' he will 'go his way sorrowful;' or will do like the Pharisees, who 'were covetous,' and having heard our Saviour discourse such things, 'derided him:' for 'the love of money,' saith St. Paul, 'is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith;' ἀπεπλανήθησαν, 'they have wandered away,' or apostatised from the faith.

If a man be ambitious, he will not approve that doctrine, which prohibiteth us to affect, to seek, to admit glory, or to do any thing for its sake; but purely to seek God's honor, and in all our actions to regard it as our principal aim: which greatly disparageth all worldly glory as vain, transitory, mischievous; which commandeth us 'in honor to prefer others before ourselves,' and to 'sit down in the lowest room;' which promiseth the best rewards to humility, and menaceth, that whoever 'exalteth himself shall be abased;' the profession and practice whereof are commonly attended with disgrace: such doctrines ambitious minds cannot admit; as it proved among the Jews; who therefore 'could not believe, because they received glory from one another;' who therefore would not profess the faith, 'because they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God.'

If a man be envious, he will not like that doctrine, which enjoineth him to desire the good of his neighbor as his own;

to have complacence in the prosperity and dignity of his brethren; 'not to seek his own, but every man another's wealth,' or welfare; 'to rejoice with them that rejoice, and mourn with those that mourn;' which chargeth us 'to lay aside all envyings and emulations,' under pain of damnation: he therefore who is possessed with an envious spirit, or evil eye, will look ill on this doctrine; as the Jews did, who being full of envy and emulation, did reject the gospel; it being a grievous eyesore to them, that the poor Gentiles were thereby admitted to favor and mercy.

If a man be revengeful or spiteful, he will be scandalised at that law, which commandeth us 'to love our enemies,' to 'bless those that curse us,' to 'do good to them that hate us,' to pray for them that despitefully use us;' which forbiddeth us to 'resist the evil,' 'to render evil for evil, or railing for railing;' which chargeth us to bear patiently, and freely to remit all injuries, under penalty of forfeiting all hopes of mercy from God; which requireth us to 'depose all wrath, animosity, and malice,' as inconsistent with our salvation: which doctrine how can a heart swelling with rancorous grudge or boiling with anger embrace? seeing it must be 'in meekness that we must receive the engrafted word, that is able to save our souls.'

If a man be intemperate, he will loathe that doctrine, the precepts of which are, that we be 'temperate in all things,' that 'we bring under our bodies,' that we 'endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ;' to 'avoid all excess;' to possess our vessels in sanctification and honor;' to 'mortify our members on earth;' to 'crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;' to 'abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul:' with which precepts how can a luxurious and filthy heart comport?

In fine, whatever corrupt affection a man be possessed with, it will work in him a distaste and repugnance to that doctrine, which indispensably, as a condition of salvation, doth prescribe and require universal holiness, purity, innocence, virtue, and goodness; which doth not allow any one sin to be fostered or indulged; which threateneth wrath and vengeance on all impiety, iniquity, impurity, wherein we do obstinately persist; indifferently, without any reserve or remedy; 'wherein the

wrath of God is revealed from heaven on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, that detain the truth in unrighteousness.'

An impure, a dissolute, a passionate soul cannot affect so holy notions, cannot comply with so strict rules, as the gospel doth recommend; as a sore eye cannot like the bright day; as a sickly palate cannot relish savory food. 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light,' because it discovereth to him his own vileness and folly; because it detecteth the sadness and wofulness of his condition; because it kindleth anguish and remorse within him; because it checketh him in the free pursuit of his bad designs, it dampeth the brisk enjoyment of his unlawful pleasures, it robbeth him of satisfaction and glee in any vicious course of practice.

Every man is unwilling to entertain a bad conceit of himself, and to pass on himself a sad doom: he therefore will be apt to reject that doctrine, which being supposed true, he cannot but confess himself to be an arrant fool, he cannot but grant himself a forlorn wretch.

No man liketh to be galled, to be stung, to be racked with a sense of guilt, to be scared with a dread of punishment, to live under awe and apprehension of imminent danger; gladly therefore would he shun that doctrine, which demonstrateth him a grievous sinner, which speaketh dismal terror, which thundereth ghastly woe on him.

He cannot love that truth which is so much his enemy, which so rudely treateth and severely persecuteth him; which telleth him so bad and unwelcome news.

Who would be content to deem Omnipotency engaged against him? to fancy himself standing on the brink of a fiery lake? to hear a roaring lion ready to devour him? to suppose that certain, which is so dreadful and sad to him?

Hence it is, that 'the carnal mind is enmity to God;' hence do bad men 'rebel against the light;' hence, 'foolish men shall not attain to wisdom, and sinners shall not see her; for she is far from pride, and men that are liars cannot remember her.'

Hence a man resolvedly wicked cannot but be willing to be an infidel, in his own defence, for his own quiet and ease; faith

being a companion very incommodious, intolerably troublesome to a bad conscience.

Being resolved not to forsake his lusts, he must quit those opinions which cross them; seeing it expedient that the gospel should be false, he will be inclinable to think it so: thus he sinketh down, thus he tumbleth himself headlong into the gulf of infidelity.

The custom of sinning doth also by degrees so abate, and at length so destroy, the loathsomeness, the ugliness, the horror thereof, doth so reconcile it to our minds, yea conciliateth such a friendship to it, that we cannot easily believe it so horrid and base a thing as by the gospel it is represented to us.

Vicious practice doth also weaken the judgment and stupify the faculties. So that we cannot clearly apprehend, or judge soundly about spiritual matters.

The same also quencheth God's Spirit, and driveth away his grace, which is requisite to the production and preservation of faith in us.

14. In fine, from what spirit infidelity doth proceed we may see by the principles, commonly with it espoused, for its support and countenance, by its great masters and patrons; all which do rankly savor of baseness and ill-nature.

They do libel and revile mankind as void of all true goodness; from the worst qualities, of which they are conscious themselves or can observe in others, patching up an odious character of it; thus shrouding themselves under common blame from that which is due to their own wickedness; and dispensing with that charity and honesty, which is by God's law required from them toward their neighbor: and having so bad an opinion of all men, they consequently must bear ill-will toward them; it not being possible to love that which we do not esteem.

They allow nothing in man to be immaterial, or immortal; so turning him into a beast, or into a puppet, a whirligig of fate or chance.

They ascribe all actions and events to necessity, or external impulse, so rasing the grounds of justice and all virtue; that no man may seem responsible for what he doth, commendable or culpable, amiable or detestable.

They explode all natural difference of good and evil; deriding benignity, mercy, pity, gratitude, ingenuity, that is, all instances of good-nature, as childish and silly dispositions.

All the relics of God's image in man, which raise him above a beast, and distinguish him from a fiend, they scorn and expose to contempt.

They extol power as the most admirable, and disparage goodness as a pitiful thing; so preferring a devil before an angel.

They discard conscience, as a bugbear, to fright children and fools; allowing men to compass their designs by violence, fraud, slander, any wrongful ways; so banishing all the securities (beside selfishness and slavish fear) of government, conversation, and commerce; so that nothing should hinder a man (if he can do it with advantage to himself and probable safety) to rebel against his prince, to betray his country, to abuse his friend, to cheat any man with whom he dealeth.

Such are the principles (not only avowed in common discourse, but taught and maintained in the writings) of our infidels; whereby the sources of it do appear to be a deplorable blindness, and desperate corruption of mind; an extinction of natural light, and extirpation of good-nature. Farther,

III. The naughtiness of infidelity will appear by considering its effects and consequences; which are plainly a spawn of all vices and villanies, a deluge of all mischiefs and outrages on the earth: for faith being removed, together with it all conscience goeth; no virtue can remain; all sobriety of mind, all justice in dealing, all security in conversation are packed away; nothing resteth to encourage men unto any good, or restrain them from any evil; all hopes of reward from God, all fears of punishment from him being discarded. No principle, or rule of practice, is left, beside brutish sensuality, fond self-love, private interest, in their highest pitch, without any bound or curb; which therefore will dispose men to do nothing but to prey on each other, with all cruel violence and base treachery. Every man thence will be a god to himself, a fiend to each other; so that necessarily the world will thence be turned into a chaos and a hell, full of iniquity and impurity, of spite and rage, of misery and torment. It depriveth each man of all

hope from providence, all comfort and support in affliction, of all satisfaction in conscience; of all the good things which faith doth yield.

The consideration of which numberless and unspeakable mischiefs hath engaged statesmen in every commonwealth to support some kind of faith, as needful to the maintenance of public order, of traffic, of peace among men.

It would suffice to persuade an infidel, that hath a scrap of wit, (for his own interest, safety, and pleasure,) to cherish faith in others, and wish all men beside himself endued with it.

It in reason obligeth all men to detest atheistical supplanters of faith, as desperate enemies to mankind, enemies to government, destructive of common society; especially considering that of all religions that ever were, or can be, the Christian doth most conduce to the benefit of public society; enjoining all virtues useful to preserve it in a quiet and flourishing state, teaching loyalty under pain of damnation.

I pass by, that 'without faith no man can please God;' that infidelity doth expose men to his wrath and severest vengeance; that it depriveth of all joy and happiness; seeing infidels will not grant such effects to follow their sin, but will reject the supposition of them as precarious and fictitious.

To conclude therefore the point, it is, from what we have said, sufficiently manifest that infidelity is a very sinful distemper, as being in its nature so bad, being the daughter of so bad causes, the sister of so bad adjuncts, the mother of so bad effects.

But this you will say is an improper subject: for is there any such thing as infidelity in Christendom? are we not all Christians, all believers, all baptised into the faith, and professors of it? do we not every day repeat the Creed, or at least say Amen thereto? do we not partake of the holy mysteries, sealing this profession? what do you take us for? for Pagans? this is a subject to be treated of in Turkey, or *in partibus infidelium*. This may be said: but if we consider better, we shall find ground more than enough for such discourse; and that infidelity hath a larger territory than we suppose: for (to pass over the swarms of atheistical apostates, which so openly abound, denying or questioning our religion) many infidels do

lurk under the mask of Christian profession. It is not the name of Christian, or the badges of our religion, that make a Christian; no more than a cowl doth make a monk, or the beard a philosopher: there may be a creed in the mouth, where there is no faith in the heart, and a cross impressed on the forehead of an infidel; 'with the heart man believeth to righteousness.' 'Show me thy faith by thy works,' saith St. James: if no works be showed, no faith is to be granted; as where no fruit, there no root, or a dead root, which in effect and moral esteem is none at all.

Is he not an infidel who denieth God? such a renegado is every one that liveth profanely, as St. Paul telleth us. And have we not many such renegadoes? if not, what meaneth that monstrous dissoluteness of life, that horrid profaneness of discourse, that strange neglect of God's service, a desolation of God's law? Where such luxury, such lewdness, such avarice, such uncharitableness, such universal carnality doth reign, can faith be there? can a man believe there is a God, and so affront him? can he believe that Christ reigneth in heaven, and so despise his laws? can a man believe a judgment to come, and so little regard his life; a heaven, and so little seek it; a hell, and so little shun it?—Faith therefore is not so rife, infidelity is more common than we may take it to be; every sin hath a spice of it, some sins smell rankly of it.

To it are attributed all the rebellions of the Israelites, which are the types of all Christian professors, who seem travellers in this earthly wilderness toward the heavenly Canaan; and to it all the enormities of sin and overflowings of iniquity may be ascribed.

I should proceed to urge the precept, that we 'take heed thereof;' but the time will not allow me to do it: I shall only suggest to your meditation the heads of things.

It is infidelity that maketh men covetous, uncharitable, discontent, pusillanimous, impatient.

Because men believe not Providence, therefore they do so greedily scrape and hoard.

They do not believe any reward for charity, therefore they will part with nothing.

They do not hope for succor from God, therefore are they discontent and impatient.

They have nothing to raise their spirits, therefore are they abject.

Infidelity did cause the Devil's apostasy.

Infidelity did banish man from Paradise, (trusting to the Devil, and distrusting God's word.)

Infidelity (disregarding the warnings and threats of God) did bring the deluge on the world.

Infidelity did keep the Israelites from entering into Canaan, the type of heaven; as the Apostle to the Hebrews doth insist.

Infidelity indeed is the root of all sin; for did men heartily believe the promises to obedience, and the threats to disobedience, they could hardly be so unreasonable as to forfeit the one, or incur the other: did they believe that the omnipotent, all-wise, most just and severe God did command and require such a practice, they could hardly dare to omit or transgress.

Let it therefore suffice to have declared the evil of infidelity, which alone is sufficient inducement to avoid it.

SUMMARY OF SERMON II.

II PETER, CHAP. I.—VERSE 1.

THE Holy Scripture recommends faith, as a most *precious* and *honorable* practice; as a virtue of the very first magnitude, commendable in itself, acceptable to God, beneficial to us, &c.

It is in a special manner commanded; and obedience to that command is reckoned a prime instance of piety: 1 John iii. 23. It is the root of our spiritual life: Heb. xi. 6. It is the principal conduit of divine grace: this shown by numerous quotations. In fine, it is that, which, being retained in a good conscience, and maintained by virtuous practice, keeps us in a state of salvation, and will finally bring us to eternal life; for *by grace we are saved, through faith.*

That faith should be thus highly dignified, has always appeared strange to the adversaries of our religion; and has suggested to them matter of obloquy against it: reasons assigned. To clear this matter and vindicate the Christian religion from their misprisions, our consideration is called to the nature and ingredients of faith; its rise and causes; its efficacy and consequences.

I. As to its nature: it involves knowlege of the most worthy and important truths; knowlege not otherwise attainable; knowlege in way of great evidence and assurance.

1. Truth is the natural food of our soul, the special ornament of our mind, the proper wealth of reason, &c.: all knowlege therefore, which is in the possession of truth, is much esteemed; and if ignorance, error, and doubt, are defects and deformities of the soul, then that knowlege which removes

them, implies the perfection, beauty, and vigor thereof. Faith therefore, as implying knowlege, is valuable.

2. But it is much more so, in regard to the quality of its objects; which are most worthy and most useful, advancing our soul into a better state, ennobling, enriching, and embellishing our nature; a knowlege, *enlightening the eyes, converting the soul, rejoicing the heart*, &c.: objects of this knowlege fully dilated on.

3. Faith also hath this excellent advantage, that it endueth us with such knowlege in a very clear and sure way; it not being grounded on any slippery deduction of reason, nor on slender conjectures of fancy, nor on musty traditions or popular rumors; but on the infallible testimony of God, conveyed by powerful evidence, striking all capacities, equally apt to enlighten the simple, and to convince the wise: this topic fully enlarged on. Thus is faith in its *nature* honorable.

II. It hath also divers ingredients, or inseparable adjuncts, which it implies, rendering it commendable and acceptable to God.

1. Faith implies a good use of reason. It was a foul aspersion cast on our religion by its ancient opposers, that it required *a mere belief, void of reason*; challenging assent to its doctrines without trial or proof. It indeed ordinarily refuses a sudden and precipitate assent, admitting no man, capable of judging and choosing for himself, to the participation of it, until after competent time and opportunities of instruction, he can approve himself to understand it well: this point examined and explained. Hence God doth not only allow, but enjoin us to use our best reason in judging of his doctrine, &c.

2. Faith implies a compliance with the providence and grace of God; with his providence framing the economy of things to be believed, discovering it to us by revelation, furnishing motives to faith and opportunities of knowlege leading thereto; with his grace operating in our souls, illuminating our minds to

discern, attracting our wills to embrace, inclining our affections to relish the heavenly truths exhibited to us: this topic enlarged on and illustrated.

3. Faith implies good opinion of God, and good actions towards him. God our parent has stamped on our nature some lineaments of himself, which are not wholly defaced; wherefore he that believeth has managed himself so as to have preserved in his soul the seeds of piety, &c. It is a great instance of respect to a person, when we yield assent to his words, though they appear incredible: this applied to Christian doctrines.

III. 1. To the engendering of faith there is required a mind sober, composed, and wakeful; ready to observe what befals, and embrace what is offered, conducive to our good; a mind not so drowned in worldly cares and sensual enjoyments, as to oversee or neglect the concerns of a better and eternal state.

That we may believe, we must have *eyes to see*, and *ears to hear*, and *a heart to understand*.

2. Faith requires much diligence and industry. We must have patience to give God the hearing, carefully attending to what is propounded; as it is said of Lydia, that she did *attend to the words spoken by St. Paul*.

3. Faith must needs proceed from sincerity and soundness of judgment; for the gospel comes under trial in a guise nowise plausible or advantageous to human conceits: it tempts us not with any bribe of earthly gain; soothes us not with courtly speech; but advances pleas against the bent of our inclinations, &c.

4. To the begetting of faith there must concur humility, together with suitable affections and desires; for he who embraces Christianity, does thereby stoop to many things very cross to the vain conceits, proud humors, and haughty stomach of man: this enlarged on.

5. To faith must conspire much fortitude, much resolution, and great courage; for he that firmly persuades himself to be

a Christian, embarks in a most difficult and dreadful warfare, and in the most bold adventures, setting himself in array against *the world, the flesh, and the Devil,* &c.

6. The noble virtue of patience is likewise accessary to faith; patience of labor in God's service; patience of hope; patience of persecution; patience of crosses and afflictions, allotted us for trial and correction.

7. With faith also must concur the virtue of prudence, in all its parts and instances; that prudence which guides and prompts us to walk by the best rules, to act in the best manner, to apply the best means to the attainment of the best ends.

8. In fine, the embracing of Christian doctrine supposes a mind imbued with all kinds of virtuous disposition in some good degree, for seeing that doctrine doth highly command and strictly enjoin all virtue, he must needs be a friend to all virtue, who can heartily approve and relish it: this topic enlarged on.

Where then are they who wonder that faith is so commended, is so accepted by God, and so crowned with reward? If from the foregoing premises it appears that faith is voluntary, it surely is very commendable.

Experience fully shows what a mighty influence in all practical matters, our will or appetite has on our judgment: this topic enlarged on.

All faith therefore, even in common things, may be deemed voluntary no less than intellectual; and Christian faith especially is such, as requiring more application of soul, managed by choice, than any other; this the opinion of the ancients: the same supposed in holy Scripture; wherein to defect of will infidelity is often ascribed.

To prevent faith being a forced act, and therefore not *moral*, God has not done all he might have done to convince men: he has raised some mists of difficulty and doubt, to exercise our eyes in looking attentively, and our willingness to see, &c.

He deals with us as he did with his ancient people: this shown. Indeed more abundant light of conviction, as it would deprive good men of much praise and reward, so might it be very hurtful to many persons, who, being indisposed to comply with truth, would outbrave it, however clear and evident. Moreover, on those whom sufficient reasons will not convince, the greatest motives would have small efficacy: this enlarged on. So much for the causes and adjuncts of faith; the effects and consequences are reserved for the next discourse.

I Believe, &c.

SERMON II.

OF THE VIRTUE AND REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

II PETER, CHAP. I.—VERSE 1.

—— to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.

THE Holy Scripture recommendeth faith (that is, a hearty and firm persuasion concerning the principal doctrines of our religion, from divine revelation taught by our Lord and his Apostles) as a most precious and honorable practice; as a virtue of the first magnitude, very commendable in itself, very acceptable to God, very beneficial to us; having most excellent fruits growing from it, most noble privileges annexed to it, most ample rewards assigned for it.

It is in a special manner commanded, and obedience to that command is reckoned a prime instance of piety: 'This is his commandment, that we should believe; this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.'

It is the root of our spiritual life; for, 'He that cometh to God must believe;' and, 'Add to your faith virtue,' saith St. Peter, supposing faith to precede other virtues.

It is the principal conduit of divine grace; for

By it we are regenerated, and become the sons of God; 'Ye all,' saith St. Paul, 'are the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.'

By it we 'abide in God,' and do possess him, saith St. John.

By it 'Christ dwelleth in us,' saith St. Paul.

By it we obtain God's Spirit: 'Did ye,' saith St. Paul, 'receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'

By it we are justified, or acquitted from guilt, and condemnation for sin: for, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God.'

By it our 'hearts are purged,' saith St. Paul; 'our souls are purified,' saith St. Peter.

By it we are freed from the dominion of sin; according to that of our Saviour; 'If ye abide in my word,—ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.'

It procureth freedom of access to God; 'We have,' saith St. Paul, 'boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.'

It is the shield, whereby we resist temptations; and the weapon, whereby we overcome the world.

In fine, it is that, which being 'retained in a good conscience,' and maintained by virtuous practice, doth keep us in a state of salvation, and will assuredly convey us into eternal life and felicity; for, 'by grace we are saved, through faith.'

That faith should be thus highly dignified, hath always appeared strange to the adversaries of our religion; and hath suggested to them matter of obloquy against it: they could not apprehend why we should be commanded, or how we can be obliged to believe; as if it were an arbitrary thing, depending on our free choice, and not rather did naturally follow the representation of objects to our mind: they would not allow that an act of our understanding, hardly voluntary, as being extorted by force of arguments, should deserve such reputation and such recompenses; for if, argued they, a doctrine be propounded with evident and cogent reason, what virtue is there in believing it, seeing a man in that case cannot avoid believing, is therein merely passive, and by irresistible force subdued? if it be propounded without such reason, what fault can it be to refuse assent, or to suspend his opinion about it? can a wise

man then do otherwise? is it not in such a case simplicity, or fond credulity, to yield assent? yea, is it not deceit or hypocrisy to pretend the doing so? may not justly then all the blame be charged rather on the incredibility of the doctrine, or the infirmity of reasons enforcing it, than on the incredulity of the person who doth not admit it? whence no philosophers ever did impose such a precept, or did assign to faith a place among the virtues.

To clear this matter, and to vindicate our religion from such misprisions, and that we may be engaged to prize and cherish it; I shall endeavor to declare that Christian faith doth worthily deserve all the commendations and the advantages granted thereto: this I shall do by considering its nature and ingredients, its rise and causes, its efficacy and consequences.

I. As to its nature; it doth involve knowlege, knowlege of most worthy and important truths, knowlege peculiar and not otherwise attainable, knowlege in way of great evidence and assurance.

1. Truth is the natural food of our soul, toward which it hath a greedy appetite, which it tasteth with delicious complacency, which being taken in and digested by it doth render it lusty, plump, and active: truth is the special ornament of our mind, decking it with a graceful and pleasant lustre; truth is the proper wealth of reason, whereof having acquired a good stock, it appeareth rich, prosperous, and mighty: what light is without, that is truth within, shining on our inward world, illustrating, quickening, and comforting all things there, exciting all our faculties to action, and guiding them in it. All knowlege therefore, which is the possession of truth, is much esteemed; even that which respecteth objects mean, and little concerning us, (such as human sciences are conversant about; natural appearances, historical events, the properties, proportions, and powers of figure, of motion, of corporeal force,) doth bear a good price, as perfective of rational nature, enriching, adorning, invigorating our mind; whence Aristotle doubteth not on all those habitual endowments, which so accomplish our understanding, to bestow the name of virtues;

that with him being the 'virtue of each thing, which anywise perfecteth it, and disposeth it for action suitable to its nature.'* And if ignorance, error, doubt, are defects, deformities, infirmities of our soul, then the knowlege which removeth them doth imply the perfection, beauty, and vigor thereof. Faith therefore, as implying knowlege, is valuable.

2. But it is much more so, in regard to the quality of its objects, which are the most worthy that can be, and most useful for us to know; the knowlege whereof doth indeed advance our soul into a better state, doth ennoble, enrich, and embellish our nature; doth raise us to a nearer resemblance with God, and participation of his wisdom; doth infuse purest delight and satisfaction into our hearts; doth qualify and direct us unto practice most conducible to our welfare; it is a knowlege, enlightening the eyes, converting the soul, rejoicing the heart; sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb; more precious than rubies; which giveth to our head an ornament of grace, and a crown of glory. For,

Thereby we understand the nature, or the principal attributes of God, of whom only the Christian doctrine doth afford a completely true and worthy character, directive of our esteem, our worship, our obedience, our imitation of him; whereby our demeanor toward him may become him, and please him.

By it we are fully acquainted with the will and intentions of God, relating both to our duty and our recompense; what he requireth from us, and what he designeth for us; on what terms he will proceed with us in way of grace, of mercy, of justice.

By it we are informed concerning ourselves, what our frame is, whence our original, to what ends we are designed, wherein our felicity doth consist, and how it is attainable.

It enableth us rightly to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong; what is worthy of us, and pleasing to God, what misbecoming us, and offensive to him; both absolutely and comparatively, according to the degrees of each case respectively.

It prescribeth us an exact rule of life, comprising all our duties toward God, our neighbor, ourselves; to observe which will be most decent, and exceedingly profitable to us.

* Arist. Eth. ii. 6.

It teacheth us from what principles, and on what grounds we should act, that our practice should be truly good and laudable.

It proposeth the most valid inducements to virtue, tendering the favor of God and eternal bliss in reward thereof, menacing divine wrath and endless woe on its neglect.

It discovereth the special aids dispensed to us for the support of our weakness against all temptations and discouragements incident to us through the course of our life.

The knowlege of these things is plainly the top of all knowlege whereof we are capable; not consisting in barren notion, not gratifying idle curiosity, not serving trivial purposes, but really bettering our souls, producing most goodly and wholesome fruits, tending to ends most noble and worthy: this indeed is the highest philosophy; the true culture and medicine of our soul; the true guide of life, and mistress of action; the mother of all virtues; the best invention of God, and rarest gift of heaven to men: for these commendations, by Pagan sages ascribed to their philosophy, do in truth solely belong to that knowlege which by faith we do possess: their philosophy could not reach such truths; it could not so much as aim at some of them; it did but weakly attempt at any: it did indeed pretend to the knowlege of divine and human things, (this being its definition, current among them,) but it had no competent means of attaining either in any considerable measure; for divine things (the nature of him who 'dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto;' the intentions of him, who 'worketh all things after the counsel of his will;' the 'ways of him, which are more discosted from our ways, than heaven from earth;' the 'depths of God, which none but his own Spirit can search out,' or discover) do lie beyond the sphere of natural light, and inquisition of our reason; and as for human things, the chief of them have such a connection with divine things, that who were ignorant of the one could nowise descry the other; wherefore those candidates of knowlege, notwithstanding their lofty pretences, were fain to rest in a low form, employing their studies on inferior things, the obscurity of nature, the subtilty of discourse, and moral precepts of life; such precepts, as their glimmering light and common experience

did suggest; for even in points of common morality and prudence human wit can but fumble, as by the great clashing and jangling about them is very notorious.

3. Faith also hath this excellent advantage, that it endueth us with such knowlege in a very clear and sure way, comparable to that whereby the theorems of any science are known; it not being grounded on any slippery deduction of reason, nor on slender conjectures of fancy, nor on musty traditions or popular rumors; but on the infallible testimony of God, conveyed unto us by powerful evidence, striking all capacities, apt with equal influence to enlighten the simple and to convince the wise. For want of this all human wisdom was so blind and lame; so various, so uncertain; nothing but confusion, unsettlement, and dissatisfaction arising from mere ratiocination; which being destitute of light and aid from heaven, doth ever grope in the dark, doth rove after shadows of truth, is bewildered in mazes of intricacy, wherein things lie involved; whence all philosophy did consist in faint guesses, plausible discourses, and endless disputes about matters of highest consequence, such as the original of the world, the administration of human things, the nature and subsistence of our soul, the way to happiness; none being able about such points to conclude with resolution, or to assert with confidence; so that in effect all the philosophers might be ranged under one great sect of sceptics, or seekers, the most advised and best disposed among them, in result of their most diligent speculations, appearing very doubtful.

But we have, as St. Peter saith, *βεβαιότερον λόγον*, 'a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to give heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place,' guiding us in the obscurities and uncertainties of life; we have 'a hope, as an anchor of the soul both sure and stable;' which stayeth and settleth our mind, being tossed with winds and waves of uncertain cogitations, suggested by different appearances of things.

Hence, as St. Chrysostom is wont to insist, by virtue of faith rustic and mechanic idiots do in true knowlege surpass the most refined wits, and children prove wiser than old philosophers: an idiot can tell us that which a learned infidel doth not know; a child can assure us that wherein a deep philoso-

pher is not resolved: for ask a boor, ask a boy educated in our religion, who made him, he will tell you, God Almighty; which is more than Aristotle or Democritus would have told: demand of him why he was made, he will answer you, to serve and glorify his Maker; and hardly would Pythagoras or Plato have replied so wisely: examine him concerning his soul, he will aver that it is immortal, that it shall undergo a judgment after this life, that accordingly it shall abide in a state of bliss or misery everlasting; about which points neither Socrates nor Seneca could assure any thing: inquire of him how things are upheld, how governed and ordered, he presently will reply, by the powerful hand and wise providence of God; whereas among philosophers one would ascribe all events to the current of fate, another to the tides of fortune; one to blind influences of stars, another to a confused jumble of atoms: pose him about the main points of morality and duty, and he will in few words better inform you than Cicero, or Epictetus, or Aristotle, or Plutarch, in their large tracts and voluminous discourses about matters of that nature.

So real a property it is of God's law 'to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowlege and discretion;' so true it is that our Lord affirmeth of himself, 'I came a light into the world, that he who believeth in me may not abide in darkness;' so justly doth St. Paul affirm concerning divine revelation, that 'it is able to make a man wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus;' being 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' This is that highway of holiness, of which the prophet saith, 'the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' Thus is faith in its nature honorable.

II. It hath also divers ingredients, or inseparable adjuncts, which it doth imply, rendering it commendable and acceptable to God. As,

1. Faith implieth a good use of reason. This is that which commendeth any virtue, that a man acting after it doth act wisely, in conformity to the frame and design of his nature, or like a rational creature; using his best faculties in the best manner, and in their proper operations toward the end intended by

the all-wise Creator: this is that on which all dispensation of justice is founded, a man being accountable for the use of his reason, so as to deserve reward for the right management, and punishment for the misuse thereof; this is that consequently, whereon God so often declareth himself to ground his judgment; so that in effect he will justify men for being wise, and condemn them as guilty of folly; whence in the holy style wisdom, and virtue or piety, are terms equivalent; and a fool doth signify the same with a vicious or impious person. And if ever a man deserveth commendation for well using his reason, it is then, when on mature deliberation he doth embrace the Christian doctrine; for so doing is a most rational act, arguing the person to be sagacious, considerate, and judicious; one who doth carefully inquire into things, doth seriously weigh the case, doth judge soundly about it.

It was a foul aspersion cast on our religion by its ancient opposers, that it did require ψιλὴν καὶ ἄλογον πίστιν, 'a mere belief, void of reason;'* challenging assent to its doctrines without any trial or proof. This suggestion, if true, were, I confess, a mighty prejudice against it, and no man indeed justly could be obliged to admit it on such terms: but it is really a gross calumny; such a proceeding being disclaimed by the teachers and advocates of our religion, being repugnant to the nature and tenor thereof; being prejudicial to its interest and design; being contrary to its use and practice. Never any religion was indeed so little liable to the censure of obtruding itself on men's credulity, none ever so freely exposed itself to a fair trial at the bar of reason; none ever so earnestly invited men to scan and sift its pretences; yea provoked them for its sake and their own, on most important considerations, (at the peril of their souls, as they tendered their own best advantage,) to a fair, discreet, careful examination thereof. Other religions have for their justification insisted on the examples of ancestors, custom and prescription of times, large extent and prevalence among crews of people, establishment by civil laws, and countenance of secular powers, (arguments extrinsecal, and of small validity in any case,) declining all other test and verdict of reason: but

* Μὴ ἐξέταζε, ἀλλὰ πίστευσον.—Orig. in Cels. (p. 84.)

our religion confideth in itself, and the pure merit of its cause; and therefore warneth men, in a case of such moment, laying aside all prejudice, to employ their best understandings on an industrious and impartial search of the truth; referring the decision and result, so far as concerneth each particular man, to the verdict of that reason and conscience with which God, in order to such purposes, hath endued every person.

It indeed ordinarily doth refuse a sullen and precipitate assent, admitting no man, capable of judging and choosing for himself, to the participation of it, or to the name and privileges of a worthy believer, until after a competent time and opportunities of instruction, he can approve himself to understand it well, and doth avow himself to be cordially persuaded of its truth.

Such is its method, and it hath not any need of other; God having provided and exhibited arguments abundantly sufficient to convince any man of its truth, who is not affectedly blind and stupid, or wantonly slothful and careless, or frowardly stiff and obstinate,

What indeed better arguments (considering the nature of the objects which faith respecteth, being things spiritual and invisible; considering also the capacities of persons concerned, being all sorts of people, wise and simple, learned and rude) could we have, or could we need, than the conspicuous excellency and usefulness of the doctrine, approving itself to the mind, and confirming itself by palpable experience of most happy fruits, springing from a practice conformable thereto; than its exact correspondence to manifold ancient presignifications and predictions concerning it; than special attestations of God thereto, not only by audible voices, and visible apparitions from heaven, but also by innumerable miraculous works; than the concurrence of divine Providence in strange methods to the propagation and maintenance of it; than the blessings and consolations attending a faithful observance of it? what subtilty of discourse, what charm of eloquence could serve to evince and impress the great truths concerning the attributes, providence, will, commands, and promises of God; concerning the immortal subsistence of our soul, the future judgment, the everlasting rewards hereafter, with such evidence and such

force, to the common and vulgar reason, or indeed to any reason of man, as do these plain arguments, needing no reach of wit or depth of judgment to sound their meaning, or feel their strength?

But if any man be too wise to be pleased with such downright and easy ways of conviction, reason itself, well followed, would lead him hither, and serve to produce faith in him; for that there is a God, reason from observation of appearances in nature and providence will collect; that goodness is one of his principal attributes, reason from the same grounds will infer; that God hath an especial regard to men will thence also become notorious; that consequently God will vouchsafe his guidance to men in their way toward happiness, will appear reasonable to conceive: that God hath not done this in any other way, reason, comparing and weighing things, will easily discern; that Christian doctrine may fairly pretend thereto, reason soon will admit; so hath reason led us to the door of faith, and being arrived thither, will (if our will be not averse) easily find entrance.

Hence God doth not only allow, but enjoin us to use our best reason in judging of this doctrine, whether it be from him, and worthy of our acceptance; he doth not bid us to retire into the dark, to shut our eyes, or to wink, when we receive it; but chargeth us to go into the clearest light; to open our eyes wide, to view it thoroughly with our best senses and sharpest attention, before we do yield our consent and approbation to it: his precepts are, that 'we examine all things, and hold fast that which is good;' that we 'believe not every spirit,' (or revelation pretended,) but 'try the spirits, whether they be of God;' that we stand on our guard, and 'take heed that no man deceive us;' that we 'be not fools,' nor 'children in understanding;' but 'wise and perfect men;' that we 'compare things different,' and 'try what is well pleasing to God;' that we be 'always ready with meekness and modesty to render unto every man demanding it an account of the hope in us.'

He therefore doth expostulate with men for their dulness, their incogitancy, their sluggishness; their folly, as the causes of their unbelief; declaring that in respect to such defaults, wilfully incurred, he will proceed to condemn it; 'He,' saith

our Lord, 'that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day;' and, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not;' 'If I had not come and spoken unto them——if I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin.' Our Lord, we see, did not urge his bare authority, or exact a faith without ground; but he claimeth it as due on two most rational accounts; his convincing discourses, and his unparalleled works; which from any well advised and well disposed person could not but win belief, that he was 'a teacher sent from God.'

Indeed, if we seriously do weigh the case, we shall find that to require faith without reason is to demand an impossibility; for faith is an effect of persuasion, and persuasion is nothing else but the application of some reason to the mind, apt to draw forth its assent; no man therefore can believe he knoweth not what or why: he that truly believeth, must apprehend the proposition, and he must discern its connexion with some principle of truth, which as more notorious to him he before doth admit; otherwise he doth only pretend to believe, out of some design, or from affection to some party; his faith is not so much really faith, as hypocrisy, craft, fondness, or faction.

God therefore neither doth nor can enjoin us faith without reason; but therefore doth require it, as matter of duty, from us, because he hath furnished sufficient reason to persuade us; and having made his doctrine credible, (a faithful, or credible, word, and worthy of all acceptation;) having given us reason chiefly to be employed in such matters, as he justly may claim our assent, so he will take well our ready surrendry of it to him, as an act of reason and wisdom becoming us.

To yield unto reason fairly proposed and proved is in any case a laudable quality, signifying that a man hath his reason to purpose, that he is guided and governed thereby, not by humor or fancy; qualifying him for conversation and business, for which nothing rendereth a man more unfit than humorous incredulity, or obstinacy against reason. It is especially commendable in these cases, concerning our better part and final state, arguing a man to be sober and advised, affording regard to things best deserving it, employing his consideration in due

place, being faithful and just to himself, in attending to his main concernments.

2. Faith implieth a compliance with the providence and grace of God; with his providence framing the economy of things to be believed, discovering it to the world by special revelation, furnishing motives apt to work faith, dispensing opportunities of knowlege leading thereto; with his grace operating in our souls, by illustration of our minds to discern, attraction of our wills to embrace, inclination of our affections to relish and like the heavenly truths exhibited to us.

There is no man to whom means are not administered, sufficient to produce in him that measure of faith, which is requisite toward the good management of his life, and his rendering an account for it at God's tribunal; there is no man also, to whom such means are afforded, whom the grace of God, who 'desireth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowlege of the truth,' doth not in some degree excite to the due improvement of them; but in effect the case is varied, because some men do embrace those means, and comply with that grace, while others do reject or neglect them.

Our Lord saith, that 'every one, who hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, doth come unto him:' but some there are, to whom the Father speaketh, yet they 'stop their ears, and refuse to hear;' some do hear in a sort, but do not learn, ill prejudices or depraved affections barring instruction from their mind; being like those of whom the Apostle saith, 'The word heard did not profit them, being not mingled with faith in those which heard it.'

'No man,' saith our Lord again, 'can come unto me except the Father draw him:' but this attraction is not compulsory; we may hold back; we may withstand it, and not follow.

'Faith,' saith St. Paul, 'is a gift of God,' and 'a favor granted to us;' ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη, 'To you,' saith he, 'it hath been graciously vouchsafed not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him;' and, 'To you,' saith our Lord, 'it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven:' but this gift is not always accepted, this favor is not always entertained; God

doth not so obtrude it on us, but that we may reject or decline it.

Faith is 'a fruit of God's Spirit;' but such as will not grow in a bad soil, not purged from weeds of corrupt prejudice, of vicious affection, of worldly care; which will not thrive without good care and culture.

God inviteth us to believe by the promulgation of his gospel, and exhortation of his ministers; he declareth abundant reason to persuade us; he representeth to our minds the beauty of Christian truth and virtue; he speaketh from without unto us by manifold arguments, able, if we are not very stupid, to convince us; he speaketh within by strong impressions on our consciences, apt, if we are not very stubborn, to subdue us; 'Behold,' saith he, 'I stand at the door, and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in unto him:' such is the case; God standeth at the door of our heart by the ministry of his word, he knocketh at it by the impulse of his grace; but to hear is the work of our vigilance, to open is an act of our voluntary compliance.

'God,' saith St. Paul, 'who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowlege of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;' God shineth on us by revelation of his truth, God shineth into us by illumination of his Spirit; the which through the ear doth convey the light of truth unto the heart: but we may by wilful obstruction exclude that light, shutting the windows of our heart against it; we may there quench it by foul affections, we may smother it in fogs of evil prejudice; we may dissipate it by troublesome cares; we may, by affected blindness, or drowsy negligence, render it indiscernible, or ineffectual to us; like those, of whom the Apostle there saith, that 'the god of this world had blinded the minds of those which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

A man may ἀπωθεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον, 'thrust away the word,' as it is said of the Jews; he may, as others of the same stamp did, 'resist the Spirit;' he may, as those worldlings in the gospel, let the seed fall beside him, or not fall deep into him,

or fall into thorns, which may choke it; he may hate the light, and therefore not come unto it; or rebel against it, as those did in Job; he may, as the Pharisees did, 'defeat the counsels,' and 'cross the desires of God.'

And as to deal thus with God's word and providence, thus to treat his Spirit and grace, is heinously criminal, so to use them well is very acceptable to God's goodness: if we yield due regard to his providence, and an obsequious ear to his word; if we cheerfully do accept his gifts, and close with his overtures of mercy; if we concur with his motions, and farther his gracious designs, he will take it kindly of us; as therein acting becomingly toward him, and gratifying him in that wherein he most delighteth, which is the procurement of our good.

3. Faith doth imply good opinion of God, and good actions toward him.

God our parent hath stamped on our nature some lineaments of himself, whereby we resemble him; he hath implanted in our soul some roots of piety toward him; into our frame he hath inserted some propensions to acknowlege him, and to affect him; the which are excited and improved by observing the manifest footsteps of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, which occur in the works of nature and providence; to preserve and cherish these is very commendable; a man thereby keeping the precious relics of the divine image from utter defacement, retaining somewhat of his primitive worth and integrity; declaring that by ill usage he hath not quite shattered or spoiled his best faculties and inclinations.

Now that he who believeth hath thus managed himself, so as to have preserved in his soul those seeds of piety, apt to conspire with the influences of grace drawing to belief, doth appear from hence, that faith doth include an assent to divers points, so thwarting our carnal sense and gust, that without a good esteem of God, and good affection toward him, we hardly could admit them; 'the carnal mind,' or brutish part within us, being, as St. Paul saith, 'enmity to God,' and 'uncapable of submission to his law;' the 'sensual man being not able to receive the things of God, for they are foolishness to him;' to balance which repugnance and indisposition there must be some

good notions and good affections in the mind, disposing it to comply with the revelation of truth and operation of grace.

There can hardly be any greater instance of respect and love toward any person, than a ready yielding of assent to his words, when he doth aver things to our conceit absurd or incredible; than resting on his promise, when he seemeth to offer things impossible, or strangely difficult; than embracing his advice, when he recommendeth things very cross to our interest, humor, and pleasure; whence Abraham's faith (expressed in hoping for a son in his decrepit age, and in offering up that son, who was so dear to him, who was 'the heir of promise,' the prop of his family and hope) is so magnified, as an argument of exceeding respect and affection toward God: 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God;' it was a great evidence of his friendship, that 'against hope he believed in hope, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able to perform;' and therefore 'it was imputed to him for righteousness;' or accepted by God, as a signal act of goodness, whereby he did testify his immovable opinion concerning the power, fidelity, and benignity of God, together with answerable goodwill toward him.

And many things doth the Christian doctrine propose, apt to try such a friendship; many a hard saying doth it assert, which a profane mind can hardly swallow or digest; there is indeed scarce any article of faith, at which we shall not boggle; any matter of duty, which we shall not start at, any promise of God, whereat we shall not stagger, if we be not seasoned with favorable apprehensions and inclinations toward him, who recommendeth them to us, as endued with those attributes which secure their credibility.

That God Almighty should erect this stately fabric of heaven and earth, decked with so rich and goodly furniture, with especial regard to man, so puny and mean a creature, whom he foresaw so ready to offend and wrong him; that on his foul misdemeanor God should not withdraw his gracious protection and care from him, but thence should take occasion of designing and capacitating him for a state far more happy than that whence he had lapsed, making his punishment a benefit, and

his deserved death a gate of immortality; that for the redemption of him, continuing in apostasy and rebellious enmity, God should please to send down out of his bosom, from the height of glory and blessedness, his own dearest Son, to partake the baseness and infirmity of our flesh, to endure the inconveniences and troubles incident to our condition, to undergo a most painful and ignominious death for the expiation of our offences; these are mysteries to which we should not easily give credence, did we not conceive God immensely good and gracious.

That God could not pitch on more compendious and commodious ways of expressing his goodness and mercy, we hardly should admit, if we did not take him to be transcendently wise, far beyond our reach and comprehension.

That Jesus, a man in appearance like to ourselves; of mean parentage, of poor estate, who lived as a beggar and a vagrant, who died as a malefactor and a slave, in semblance forlorn to God and man, should be the Lord of life and glory, the general Author of salvation, the Judge of all men, the King of all the world, is a point which cannot but appear very strange, very scandalous to minds not imbued with special reverence of the divine power and wisdom.

That God, who is so perfectly holy, so exactly just, so extremely displeased with iniquity, should yet bear so patiently, and so easily pardon enormous transgressions against himself; that he should accept so mean services, and to so slight performances should dispense so precious rewards, who would believe, that is not possessed with conceptions of his admirable clemency and bounty?

That God one day will raise the dead, re-collecting our scattered dust, and rearing our dissolved frame, we should not easily grant, had we not a strong opinion of God's power, and that nothing is too hard for him to accomplish.

That to deny ourselves in all ways, to 'hate our own souls,' to take up a cross, to forsake kindred and friends, to quit houses and lands, 'to renounce all that we have,' to reject the profits, the honors, the delights of the world, to cut off our right hands, to pluck out our right eyes, to mortify our members, and crucify our flesh, to be dead to the world, to expose our lives unto

greatest dangers, yea, to sacrifice them unto certain loss, are often things very good, most advisable and eligible, how could we be ever induced to conceive, if we did not take God to be most wise, who hath prescribed such duties; most faithful, who hath engaged to satisfy us for the discharge of them; most able fully to requite us for the pains and damages which we sustain in such practice?

That the methods of Providence should be so intricate and unaccountable; that the passage to happiness should be so rough, and that to misery so smooth; that He who disposeth all things, should to those whom he most liketh and loveth dispense temptations, crosses, disgraces, all kinds of hardship and sorrow; permitting those whom he disapproveth and detesteth to live without interruption in quiet, splendor, and jollity; would stumble one, who hath not entertained a general assurance concerning the wisdom and equity of God.

Faith, therefore, in most of its chief parts, doth imply him that owneth it to be well conceited and well affected toward his Maker; thereby avowing his most glorious perfections, the which do assure the truth of his word and doctrine; 'He,' saith our Lord, 'that hath received my testimony, hath set his seal, that God is true:' that is, most evidently he doth signify his opinion of God's veracity and fidelity, together with the divine perfections requisite to make them good; for be (saith the believer in his mind) the proposition never so uncouth to my apprehension, yet God is true who affirmeth it; be the duty never so harsh to my sense, yet God is wise and good who appointeth it; be the promise never so unlikely in appearance to find effect, yet God is faithful and able to perform it: and he that is thus disposed in judgment and affection toward God, no wonder if his demeanor be very acceptable to him.

Thus is faith precious, considering its nature, and those essential ingredients, or inseparable adjuncts, which it doth include or imply. It will also appear to be so, if we consider its rise, and those good dispositions which concur in its production.

III. 1. To the engendering of faith there is required a mind sober, composed, and wakeful; ready to observe what befalleth, apt to embrace what is offered, conducible to our good and

advantage; a mind not so drowned in worldly care, sensual enjoyment, or impertinent sport, as to oversee or neglect the concerns of our better part and eternal state.

That we may believe, we must have 'eyes to see,' and 'ears to hear,' and 'a heart to understand;' we must attentively look with our eyes, we must 'incline our ears to God's word,' we must 'apply our heart to instruction.'

Thus in the apostolical history we may observe that when the Apostles, in a manner apt to stir any man, being awake, to remark, did propose their doctrine, some readily did yield their ears and hearts to their discourse; while others did not mind or regard it.

2. Faith doth require much diligence and industry. We must have the patience to give God the hearing, carefully attending to what is propounded; as it is said of Lydia, that she did προσέχειν, 'attend to the words spoken by St. Paul;' and δεῖ περισσοτέρως προσέχειν, 'we must,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'yield extraordinary attention to the things heard;' we must, as our Saviour warneth, let the evangelical 'word sink down into our ears:' we must take the pains to consider the notions, and to weigh the reasons enforcing them; as the Bereans did, who did ἀνακρίνειν τὰς γραφὰς, 'examine the Scriptures, whether those things were so,' as St. Paul did teach out of them. We must ἐνδείκνυσθαι τὴν σπουδὴν, exert and demonstrate that studious care, which is requisite to get a clear knowlege and firm persuasion concerning the points of belief; for 'he that received the seed into the good ground,' was ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ συνιών, 'he that heard the word, and did understand it,' or well consider it; God for this reason doth lay his truth not so open or obvious, that we may be somewhat exercised, and put to use a pious diligence in finding it; it lieth under the surface, that we may delve for it; searching the Scriptures, weighing reasons, comparing things.

3. Faith must needs proceed from sincerity and soundness of judgment.

The assent, which on contemplation and considering of things we do yield to them, is usually termed judgment; and it much resembleth that act, whose name it borroweth: for as he is a good judge, who after a full cognisance and careful discussion

of the case with its pleas, doth pronounce freely and fairly, being no way swayed either by his own inclination, or by temptation from without; who is not biassed by any previous affection or dislike, not drawn by favor, not daunted by fear, not bribed by profit, not charmed by flattery, not dazzled by specious appearance, not gulled by crafty insinuations or by fine speech, not tired by solicitation or importunity, not seduced by precedents or custom; not perverted by any such means, which are indirect, impertinent, or extrinsical to the cause, so as to give a wrong sentence; so is he that assenteth to Christian truth: many considerations will exempt him from any suspicion of being anywise so corrupted.

For the gospel cometh under trial in a guise nowise plausible or advantageous to human conceit: its garb and circumstances are nowise taking, or attractive of any favor to it; but such rather as are apt to raise dislike and scandal against it; it being, as St. Paul saith, presented up 'in earthen vessels,' in a way very homely and contemptible. It representeth a mean, a poor, a persecuted, a crucified man offering salvation, and claiming obedience; attended by persons of like condition and fortune, urging the same overtures and pretences on us: and what impression is such an appearance likely to work on our fancy, which is prone to affect splendid and pompous shows?

The same doth not present to us any bribe of gain, doth not tempt us with any hope of preferment, doth not allure us with any bait of pleasure; but challengeth a free sentence; and that such an one, which may greatly prejudice our worldly interests, may spoil our profit, may stop our preferment, may dash all our pleasure; 'In the world ye shall have tribulation:' 'We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God:' 'Every one that will live godlily in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution:' 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Such are the promises and enticements it useth.

Neither doth it sooth or court us by glozing speech, so as to recommend itself to our fancies by raising in us a good conceit of ourselves; but dealeth bluntly and coarsely with us; faithfully and plainly acquainting us with our own case, involved in its cause; how grievous sinners we be, how obnoxious to jus-

tice we stand; how worthless we are, how wretched we shall be, secluding that mercy and grace of God, which it tendereth on its own terms, of confessing our guilt, disclaiming our merit, humbly seeking mercy, forsaking our own ways, and submitting to God's will.

It doth not solicit us in trim language, nor by sly insinuations doth inveigle us to embrace it; but in downright terms, in a plain dress of speech, in a resolute strain doth charge us, on our peril, to do it right, denouncing on our refusal extremities of wrath and vengeance.

It advanceth pleas against the bent of our temper, which ever is prone to things forbidden, and averse from things enjoined by it: against the prejudices of our mind, which is always apt to approve or to admire things which it condemneth or vilifieth; to dislike or despise things which it commendeth and magnifieth: against the affections of our heart, the dearest objects of whose love, delight, and care it would discard and drive from us; the most unwelcome and disgustful things whereto it would introduce and bring to us: against our strongest appetites, and most earnest passions; the violent motions of which it doth curb and check; doth quell, or doth allay: against many temptations, potently drawing us to things which it reclaimeth, stoutly driving us from things which it recommendeth: against the stream of habitual usage, and the torrent of common example, things so prevalent on us: in fine, against ourselves, such as we naturally are, such as we by education and custom are made; whom it impeacheth of heinous guilt and enormous folly; whose conceit and credit it debaseth; whom it depresseth into the confines of hell and misery: all within us, all about us, do with might and main oppose it; our lust, our fancy, our honor, our interest, our reputation, our principles, our customs, our friends, our enemies; the flesh, the world, the devil, all combinedly are so many fierce adversaries, so many shrewd advocates, so many clamorous solicitors against its cause.

He therefore, who notwithstanding all these disadvantages determineth in favor of it, must assuredly be a very upright, impartial, and incorrupt judge; declaring his sense purely according to the dictates of his reason and conscience.

What indeed greater integrity can a man express, than in

thus deciding a cause referred to him so much against himself, as he is naturally affected, and standeth related to things here? What greater equity can he show, than in avowing so harsh, so rough, so unpleasing truths, so little gratifying his own sense or fancy, so little favoring his profit or pleasure? What greater ingenuity can there be, than to espouse that doctrine which pincheth our liberty within so narrow bounds; which layeth such restraints on our thoughts, our words, our actions; which interdicteth to us so many enjoyments, which exacteth from us so great pains?

4. To the begetting faith there must concur humility, or a readiness to entertain sober and moderate opinions of ourselves, together with suitable affections and desires; for he that with hearty persuasion and serious resolution embraceth Christianity, doth thereby stoop to many things very cross to the vain conceit, the proud humor, and haughty stomach of man.

The first step into the Christian state is a sight and sense of our own imperfection, weakness, baseness, and misery: we must discern and feel that our mind is very blind and our reason very feeble; that our will is very impotent, lame, depraved, prone to evil, and averse from good; that our life is void of merit, and polluted with guilt; that our condition is deplorably sad and wretched; that of ourselves we are insufficient to think or do any good, in order to our recovery or deliverance; whence we are obliged to sore compunction of spirit for our deeds and our case, to humble confession of our sins and miseries, to earnest supplication for mercy and grace, to heal and rescue us from our sad estate: 'Lord have mercy on me, a sinner:' 'What shall I do to be saved?' 'Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Such are the ejaculations of a soul teeming with faith.

He that entereth into the faith, must therewith intirely submit his understanding, and resign his judgment to God, as his master and guide; being ready to believe whatever God declareth, however to his seeming unintelligible or incredible; to follow whither God conducteth, although like Abraham he 'knoweth not whither he goeth;' to approve that which God ordaineth, however distasteful to his sense; to undertake that which God requireth, however difficult; to bear that which God imposeth, how burdensome soever; being content that Divine

wisdom shall absolutely sway and reign over his wisdom; that his reason shall be puzzled, shall be baffled in many cases; that his mind shall be rifled of all its prejudices, its fond curiosities, its presumptuous confidences, of 'every thought and device' advancing itself against divine truth.

He must abandon all good opinion of himself, all conceitedness of his own worth, merit, excellency, felicity in any kind; slighting his wealth, his power, his dignity, his wit, his wisdom, and the like advantages natural or secular, which are so much prized in vulgar and worldly esteem; as things in themselves of no consideration, nor otherwise valuable than as talents entrusted by God, or instruments of his service; disowning them from himself, as things freely dispensed by God, and absolutely depending on his disposal: saying with St. Paul, 'Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowlege of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.'

He also that cordially doth embrace the Christian doctrine, with resolution of conforming his practice thereto, must look for it to sustain much disgrace; to be hated, to be censured and taxed, to be slighted and scorned, to be reproached, to be spurned as a fool, an idiot, a humorist, a silly, superstitious, fantastical, morose body, by the world, and the adherents to its corrupt principles, its vicious fashions, its depraved sentiments and practices; 'who will wonder (with indignation and scorn) at those who do not run into the same excess of riot, speaking evil and railing at them:' especially in times when wickedness 'doth lift up its horn,' when profaneness doth not only much prevail, but doth insult, and vapor over piety.

Every Christian as such immediately doth admit notions quite debasing high conceit, which ascribe all our good things purely to divine bounty, which allow us to own nothing but evils springing from our defects, infirmities, and corruptions, from our guilty naughtiness and folly; which display our great imperfection, indigency, impotency, ignorance, error, unworthiness, and forlorn wretchedness; which assure that we do sub-

sist in total dependence on God, continually needing his protection, succor, and mercy.

He must undertake the practice of duties extremely cross to proud humor; to comport with injuries and affronts, without revenge, without resentment of them; to place himself beneath others; to be content with his state, how mean and poor soever; to bear patiently all events incident to him, however sad and grievous; with the like, contrary to the gust of a proud heart.

He that doth thus demean himself, embracing such notions, and complying with such duties, how can he otherwise than be a very humble, sober, and modest person?

5. To faith much fortitude, much resolution, and courage must conspire; for he that firmly persuadeth himself to be a Christian, doth embark in a most difficult and dreadful warfare, doth undertake most high and hazardous enterprises, doth engage in the boldest adventures that a man can set on; he intendeth to encounter most puissant, stout, and fierce enemies; to fight many a bloody battle; to attack many a stronghold, to sustain many a sharp brunt, to endure many sore hardships, to run into many terrible dangers, to break through many tough difficulties, to surmount many great discouragements, impediments, and oppositions.

He doth set himself in array against the world, the flesh, and the devil, that strong confederacy banded against him with their utmost force of strength and subtilty.

He must combat the world, by its fair looks, flatteries, and caresses, enticing to sin; by its frowns, menaces, and rough treatments, deterring from duty; ensnaring us by its profits, its glories, its pleasures; seducing us by its bad customs and examples; distracting us with its cares and amusements of business.

He must cope with the flesh, that intestine and treacherous foe; which with its corrupt prejudices and imaginations, with its stubborn proclivities, with its impetuous appetites, with its boisterous passions, doth 'war against our soul, striving to bring our minds into captivity under the law of sin which is in our members.'

He must grapple with the devil, that strong one, that

greedy lion, that wily snake, that rueful dragon always waiting to surprise us, always gaping to devour us, always laying close trains to entrap us, always throwing fiery darts of temptation, to consume or scorch us; 'Our wrestling,' as the Apostle doth express it, 'is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places.'

In these conflicts he must expect to meet with many a grievous repulse, to bear many a hard knock, to feel many a sore wound; to be often beat back, often knocked down, often thrust through, often trampled on, and insulted over.

To set on these things is surely the highest gallantry that can be; he that hath the heart to attempt and undergo such things, is a daring and brave man indeed; he that successfully can achieve such exploits is truly a hero; most deserving notable trophies, and everlasting monuments of renown.

The undertakings of Alexander, of Hannibal, of Cæsar, did not signify valor like to this; their achievements were but toys in comparison to these: those famous gallants would have found it infinitely harder to conquer the world in this way; to have subdued their lusts, and mastered their passions, would have proved far more difficult, than to get advantage in scuffles with armed men; to discomfit legions of devils would have been to them another kind of work, than was the vanquishing squadrons of Persians, of Gauls, of Romans: to have set on their own ambition and vanity, their intemperance, their revenge; to have quelled those inward enemies; to have sustained affronts, disgraces, afflictions, with a calm and contented mind, would have more tried their courage, than all which they attempted; making a great show, but signifying little of true fortitude.

6. The noble virtue of patience is likewise accessary to faith; thereto all kinds of patience must concur; patience of labor in God's service, and obedience to all his commands; 'patience of hope,' in waiting for the accomplishment of God's pleasure; patience of persecution for God's sake, and in conscience of our duty to him; patience of crosses and afflictions by God's disposal allotted to us for our instruction, our exercise,

our probation, our correction, and improvement in goodness. For,

Christianity is the great school and special academy of patience, wherein we are informed, are inured, are trained up and tried to bear all things: the cross is the badge of our profession, without willingly carrying which, we cannot be the children of God or disciples of Christ; whereby we are 'conformed to the image of our Lord,' the 'man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief;' tribulation is our lot, to which we are appointed, and to which we are called; persecution is the condition proposed to us; it being told us, that 'every one who will live godlily in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution:' affliction is the way toward happiness, 'for by many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven;' it is represented as a favor granted to us to suffer; for ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη, 'to you,' saith St. Paul, 'it hath been indulged, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for him:' it is our glory, our joy, our beatitude. Our work is 'to run with patience the race that is set before us:' in fine, faith and patience are the pair, which being coupled together draw us to the 'inheritance of the promises;' patience being needful to introduce and support faith.

7. With faith also must concur the virtue of prudence in all its parts and instances: therein is exerted a sagacity, discerning things as they really are in themselves, not as they appear through the masks and disguises of fallacious semblance, whereby they would delude us; not suffering us to be abused by the gaudy shows, the false glosses, the tempting allurements of things; therein we must use discretion in prizing things rightly, according to their true nature and intrinsic worth; in choosing things really good, and rejecting things truly evil, however each kind may seem to our erroneous sense; therein we must have a good prospect, extending itself to the final consequences of things, so that looking over present contingencies we descry what certainly will befal us through the course of eternal ages.

In faith is exercised that prudence, which guideth and prompteth us to walk by the best rules, to act in the best manner, to apply the best means toward attainment of the best ends.

The prudence of faith is indeed the only prudence considerable; all other prudence regarding objects very low and ignoble, tending to designs very mean or base, having fruits very poor or vain. To be wise about affairs of this life (these fleeting, these empty, these deceitful shadows) is a sorry wisdom; to be wise in 'purveying for the flesh,' is the wisdom of a beast, which is wise enough to prog for its sustenance; to be wise in gratifying fancy is the wisdom of a child, who can easily entertain and please himself with trifles; to be wise in contriving mischief, or embroiling things, is the wisdom of a fiend, in which the old serpent, or grand politician of hell, doth exceed all the Machiavels in the world: this, as St. James saith, is 'earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom;' but the wisdom of faith, or that 'wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good works.'

8. In fine, the embracing Christian doctrine doth suppose a mind imbued with all kinds of virtuous disposition in some good degree; for seeing that doctrine doth highly commend and strictly prescribe all virtue, he must needs be a friend to all virtue, and a devoted servant thereto, who can heartily approve and like it: his eye must be sound, and clear from mists of bad prejudice, who can ken the beauty, and bear the lustre of it; his palate must be pure from vicious tinctures, who can relish its sweetness; his heart must be void of corrupt affections and desires, who sincerely doth affect it, and firmly doth cleave thereto; his conscience must be good, who can hope for the excellent rewards which it proposeth, who can stand proof against the terrible menaces it denounceth; his intentions must be upright, who dareth offer them to be scanned by so exact rules; his life must in good measure be blameless, who can present it before the bar of so rigorous judgment; he must be a man of much goodness, ingenuity, and integrity, who can think it expedient, who can be content and willing that such a doctrine be accounted true, which so plainly discountenanceth, which so peremptorily condemneth, which so severely punisheth all kinds of wickedness; for 'He,' as our Saviour saith, and he alone, 'who doeth the truth, doth come to the light, that his deeds may be manifested.' Faith therefore, and good con-

science, are well by St. Paul so often coupled as inseparable associates.

Where now are they, who wonder that faith is so commended, doth find such acceptance with God, and is so crowned with reward; who would banish it from the company of virtues, and out of all moral consideration; who would have it taken for an involuntary act, forced on the mind, and issuing from dry speculation? for seeing so many excellent dispositions of soul are its ingredients, essentially connected with it; seeing so many noble acts of will do concur to its production; seeing it hath so many choice virtues inseparably adherent, as previous or concomitant to it; it is no wonder that they should moralise it, should render it very considerable, so capable of praise, so worthy of recompense.

If we therefore do believe, because we will apply our minds to regard our best concerns, because we will yield due attention to the declarations and overtures of God, because we will take the pains to weigh the reasons persuasive of truth, because we look on things with an indifferent eye, and judge uprightly about them, because we have the courage, the patience, the prudence, the innocence, requisite for avowing such truths; then surely faith is voluntary, and therefore very commendable.

Whoever indeed will consider the nature of man, or will consult obvious experience, shall find that in all practical matters our will or appetite hath a mighty influence on our judgment of things; causing men with great attention to regard that which they affect, and carefully to mark all reasons making for it; but averting from that which they dislike, and making them to overlook the arguments which persuade it; whence men generally do suit their opinions to their inclinations; warping to that side where their interest doth lie, or to which their complexion, their humor, their passions, their pleasure, their ease doth sway them; so that almost any notion will seem true, which is profitable, which is safe, which is pleasant, or anywise grateful to them; that notion false, which in any such respect doth cross them: very few can abstract their minds from such considerations, or embrace pure truth, divested of them; and those few who do so, must therein most employ

their will, by strong efforts of voluntary resolution and patience disengaging their minds from those clogs and biasses. This is particularly notorious in men's adherence to parties, divided in opinion, which is so regulated by that sort of causes, that if you do mark what any man's temper is, and where his interest lieth, you may easily prognosticate on what side he will be, and with what degree of seriousness, of vigor, of zeal he will cleave thereto: a timorous man you may be almost sure will be on the safer side; a covetous man will bend to that party, where gain is to be had; an ambitious man will close with the opinion passing in court; a careless man will comply with the fashion; affection arising from education or prejudice will hold others stiff; few do follow the results of impartial contemplation.

All faith, therefore, even in common things, may be deemed voluntary, no less than intellectual; and Christian faith is especially such, as requiring thereto more application of soul, managed by choice, than any other; whence the ancients, in their description of it, do usually include this condition, supposing it not to be a bare assent of the understanding, but a free consent of the will: 'Faith,' saith Clemens Alexandrinus,* 'is a spontaneous acceptance, and compliance with divine religion;' and, 'To be made at first was not in our power; but God persuadeth us to follow those things which he liketh, choosing by the rational faculties which he hath given us, and so leadeth us to faith;' saith Justin the Martyr.†

The same is supposed in holy Scripture; where of believers it is said that they did *ἀσμένως*, gladly, or willingly receive the word, and they received it *μετὰ πάσης προθυμίας*, with all willingness, or readiness of mind.

And to defect of will infidelity is often ascribed: 'Ye will not come unto me,' saith our Saviour, 'that ye might have life;' and, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!' and, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding,

* Clem. Strom. ii. p. 265. † Just. Mart. Apol. ii. (p. 59.)

and they would not come:' and, 'Of this,' saith St. Peter of some profane infidels,' they are willingly ignorant, that by the word of God the heavens were of old:' and of the like St. Paul saith, 'That they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

Indeed to prevent this exception, that faith is a forced act, and therefore not moral; or to render it more voluntary and worthy, God hath not done all that he might have done to convince men, or to wring belief from them: he hath not stamped on his truth that glaring evidence, which might dazzle our minds; he doth not propose it armed with irresistible cogency; he hath not made the objects of faith conspicuous to sense, nor the propositions thereof demonstrable by reason, like theorems of geometry: this indeed would be to depose faith, to divest it of its excellency, and bereave it of its praise; this were to deprive us of that blessedness, which is adjudged to those who believe and do not see; this would prostitute wisdom to be defloured by the foolish, and expose truth to be rifled by the profane; this would take from our reason its noblest exercise, and fairest occasion of improvement; this would confound persons fit to be distinguished, the sagacious and the stupid, the diligent and the slothful, the ingenuous and the froward, the sober and the vain, the pious and the profane; the children of wisdom, which are apt to justify it, and the sons of folly, who hate knowlege; the friends of truth and virtue, and the lovers of falsehood and unrighteousness.

God therefore hath exhibited his truth, shining through some mists of difficulty and doubt, that only those who have clear eyes, who do look attentively, who are willing to see, may discern it; that those who have eyes may see, and 'those who have ears may hear.' He meaneth this way of discovering his mind for a test to prove our ingenuity, for a field to exercise our industry, for an occasion to express his goodness in crowning the wisdom and virtue of good believers; that 'the trial of your faith,' saith St. Peter, 'being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable

and full of glory.' He meaneth also thence to display his justice in punishing the slothful, the vain, the perverse, the profane; that, as the Apostle saith, 'all men might be judged, who believed not the truth—but had pleasure in unrighteousness:' hence, 'There must of necessity be scandals,' said our Saviour; hence our Lord was 'set for a mark to be contradicted, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed;' and, 'There must be heresies,' saith St. Paul; why? that 'they which are approved (*οἱ δόκιμοι*, persons that can bear the test) may be manifested.'

God dealeth with us as he did with his ancient people. He, to assure them of his gracious protection and providence over them, or to persuade them of the truth of what he by Moses taught them, did before their eyes perform stupendous works in their behalf, affording them miraculous deliverances from their enemies, and prodigious supplies of their needs; the sight of which did extort a temporary belief; 'Then,' it is said, 'they believed his words, and sang his praise;' and, when 'Israel saw that great work which the Lord did on the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.' Yet withal God suffered divers things to fall out, 'to humble them,' as it is said, 'and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep his commandments, or no:' the result of which dispensations was, that they being inconsiderate, impatient, and refractory, 'believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation;' 'they despised that pleasant land, and gave no credence to his word:' so God dealt with that typical people; and in like manner doth he proceed with us: he hath ministered signal attestations to the gospel; he hath dispensed arguments abundantly sufficient to convince well disposed minds of its truth; but he hath not cleared it from all scruples, which may disturb the froward or the delicate; he hath not exempted it from all scandals which may disgust the perverse and stubborn; he hath not prevented all exceptions or cavils devisable by curious or captious wits against it; he hath not guarded it wholly from the malicious opposition of those, whose interest it might seem, in favor of their vices and follies, to impugn it: just it was, that to such the gospel should be 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of of-

fence; who stumble at the word, being disobedient, unto which they were appointed,' (that is, God having so purposely ordered the evangelical dispensation, that such persons should not approve it, or comply with it;) just it was, that they should be debarred from a knowlege of that truth which they should abuse, and 'detain in unrighteousness;' just it was, that they should be punished with such temptations unto doubt and error, 'who would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.'

Indeed, more abundant light of conviction, as it would deprive good men of much praise and reward, so it might be hurtful to many persons; who having affections indisposed to comply with truth, would outface and outbrave it, however clear and evident; 'they would,' as Job speaketh, 'rebel against the light,' although shining on them with a meridian splendor; they would plunge themselves into an inexcusable and incorrigible state of impiety, 'doing despite to the Spirit of grace,' and involving themselves in the 'unpardonable sin;' as we have many instances in the evangelical history of those, who beholding unquestionable evidences of divine power attesting to our Lord's doctrine, which they could not but acknowlege, did yet oppose it, did blaspheme against it, did outrageously persecute it.

Should God, as he once did in a dreadful manner, thunder out his laws, and 'shake the earth with his voice,' yet many would little regard them; should God, in confirmation of his will, perform every day as many miracles, as he did once in Egypt, yet there would be Pharoahs, 'hardening their hearts' against it: should God himself descend from heaven, as once he did, and converse with us, instructing us by discourse and practice, displaying among us conspicuous evidences of his power and goodness, yet 'who would believe his report, to whom would the arm of the Lord be revealed?' how few cordially would embrace his doctrine, or submit to his law! As it was then, so it would be now; he would be hated, be scorned, be affronted, and abused, by persons qualified with like affections, as those were, who so then did serve him; for in all times like persons will do like things: as then only his sheep (that is, well disposed persons, like sheep, simple, harm-

less, and ductile) 'did hear his voice, and follow him;' so others 'would not believe him, because they were not of his sheep,' being imbued with swinish, currish, wolvish dispositions, incapacitating them to follow his conduct: there would be persons like to those, of whom it is said, 'Behold, ye scorners, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.'

(It is with instituted religion as it is with natural; the works of nature are so many continual miracles of divine power and wisdom; in the common track of Providence many wonderful things do occur; yet who by them is moved to acknowlege and adore God? notwithstanding them, how many Atheists and Epicureans are there! So will it be in regard to divine revelations, which, however clearly attested, will yet be questioned.)

Those indeed whom sufficient reasons (such as God hath dispensed to us) will not convince, on them the greatest motives would have small efficacy; so father Abraham told the rich man; 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'

They may pretend, if they had more light, they would be persuaded; like those who said, 'Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe;' but it would not in effect prove so, for they would yet be devising shifts, and forging exceptions; or, however, they would oppose an impudent face, and an obstinate will against the truth.

Wherefore it was for the common good, and to Divine wisdom it appeared sufficient, that on the balance truth should much outweigh falsehood, if the scales were held in an even hand, and no prejudices were thrown in against it; that it should be conspicuous enough to eyes, which do not avert themselves from it, or wink on purpose, or be clouded with lust and passion; it was enough that infidelity is justly chargeable on men's wilful pravity; and that *πρόφασιν οὐκ ἔχουσι*, 'they have not,' as our Saviour saith, 'any reasonable excuse' for it.

But so much for the causes and adjuncts of faith; the effects and consequences of it I reserve for another occasion.

SUMMARY OF SERMON III.

II PETER, CHAP. I.—VERSE 1.

Of all Christian virtues, as there is none more approved by God, so there is none less considered or valued by men, than faith; always attacked by the adversaries of our religion: but that it worthily deserves the praise and privileges assigned to it, we may be satisfied, if we consider well its nature and ingredients; its causes and rise; its effects and consequences: what has been said on the two former topics briefly recapitulated: the last only now insisted on at large.

Its effects are of two sorts; one springing naturally from it, the other following it in way of recompense from divine bounty. The first sort only touched on; because in this its virtue is most seen, as in the other its felicity.

Faith is naturally efficacious in producing many rare fruits, &c. Even in common life it is the compass by which men steer their practice, the main spring of all action. What but this moves the husbandman to take such pains in cultivating his ground? &c. What but faith, eyeing *the prize*, quickens us to *run patiently the race that is set before us?*

In reason a steady belief of one point or two only would suffice to engage us on all duty, and restrain us from all sin: instance of the future judgment and its results—the favor of Almighty God secured by a pious course of life—his wrath by vicious conduct: these points enlarged on. Such a general influence is faith (looking with provident eye on the future consequences of things) apt to have on our practice.

We are told that faith doth *purify our souls*, and *cleanse*

our hearts; that is, our whole interior man, all the faculties of the soul, &c. *Add to your faith virtue,* saith St. Paul; implying the natural order of things.

The chief of all virtues, piety, seems according to reason inevitably consequent from it: this point enlarged on and explained.

After piety, the next great virtue is *charity,* the which also is easily derived from *a pure heart,* as St. Paul saith, *and faith unfeigned;* it representing particular obligations and inducements thereto, from the peremptory commands of God, the strict relations between Christians, and the stupendous patterns of charity set before us: this enlarged on.

In like manner is faith productive of *meekness,* in bearing injuries, neglects, and provocations of any kind: for who can entertain any long or rancorous grudge against him whom he believeth his brother, and that on so many accounts he is obliged to love him? This shown.

Again, faith is the mother of *sincerity,* that comprehensive virtue which seasons all others and keeps them sound; for as it assures us that an all-seeing eye views our very hearts, how vain must dissimulation appear to us! &c.

Likewise the admirable virtue of *humility* sprouts up from faith, informing us that we have nothing of our own to boast of; &c.

It also engages us to the virtue of *temperance,* discovering not only the duty, but the necessity thereof, in regard to our state, which is one of continual exercise and strife; and *every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*

Again, it produces *contentedness* in our state; for how can he, who is satisfied that God appoints him his station, &c. be disconsolate or despair?

It also begets a cheerful *tranquillity* of mind *and peace of conscience,* in regard to our future state; which St. Paul calls *all joy and peace in believing:* &c.

Again, it is faith which breeds the *courage*, and upholds the *patience* requisite to support us in our spiritual course; for he who believes himself in his undertakings backed by Omnipotence, and that, as St. Paul, *he can do all things through Christ strengthening him*, what should he fear to undertake? Armed with spiritual panoply we may face our most redoubtable enemies, the world, the flesh, the devil. With respect to *patience*, faith will also arm us with it, to endure all events with alacrity and comfort, lightening the most heavy burdens, and sweetening the most distasteful occurrences; persuading us that for any damage suffered here we shall hereafter become great gainers, *receivers*, as the gospel promises, *a hundred fold*, &c. This point enlarged on.

But it may perhaps be said; These are indeed fine sayings, but where do such effects appear? who is found to act according to these notions? To this objection, which is a shrewd one, it may be replied: You say where are such effects? where are such men? I ask then, where is faith? where are believers? Show me the one, and I will show you the other. This point enlarged on.

To our infidelity therefore, to the insincerity, or deadness of our faith, the great defects of our practice are to be ascribed. But if such effects can now rarely be found, yet time was when they were more rife; scarce any time has been quite destitute of them: instances of the powerful effects of faith given; of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, of many judges and prophets in Israel; but especially of the Apostles and primitive saints. This principle it was that enabled them to perform such prodigious acts, and to endure things so insupportable; &c. *A grain of faith*, saith our Saviour, *is able to remove mountains;* that is, to accomplish things in appearance very strange and difficult. Concluding observations.

I Believe, &c.

SERMON III.

OF THE VIRTUE AND REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

II PETER, CHAP. I. VERSE 1.

——to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.

Of all Christian virtues, as there is none more approved and dignified by God, so there is none less considered or valued by men, than faith; the adversaries of our religion have always had a special pique at it; wondering that it should be commanded, as if it were an arbitrary thing, or in our choice to believe what we please; why it should be commended, as if it were praiseworthy to be subdued by reason; either by that which is too strong for us to resist, or by that which is too weak to conquer us.

But that faith worthily deserveth the praises and privileges assigned thereto, we may be satisfied, if we do well consider its nature and ingredients, its causes and rise, its effects and consequences.

In its nature it doth involve knowlege, or the possession of truth, which is the natural food, the proper wealth, the special ornament of our soul; knowlege of truths most worthy of us, and important to us, as conversing about the highest objects, and conducing to the noblest use; knowlege peculiar and not otherwise attainable, as lying without the sphere of our sense, and beyond the reach of our reason; knowlege conveyed to us

with great evidence and assurance; the greatest indeed that well can be, considering the nature of its objects, and the general capacities of men, and the most proper way of working on reasonable natures.

It implieth (that which giveth to every virtue its form and worth) a good use of our reason, in carefully weighing and uprightly judging about things of greatest concernment to us; it implieth a closing with God's providence dispensing opportunities, and representing motives serving to beget it; a compliance with God's grace attracting and inclining our souls to embrace his heavenly truth: it implieth also good opinions of God, and good affections toward him, which are requisite to the believing (on his testimony, promise, or command) points very sublime, very difficult, very cross to our fancy and humor.

The causes also, which concur in its production, are very excellent; many virtuous dispositions of soul are requisite to the conception and birth of it: there must be a sober, composed, and wakeful mind, inquisitive after truth, apt to observe it starting, and ready to lay hold on it: there must be diligence and industry in attending to the proposals, and considering the enforcements of it: there must be sincerity and soundness of judgment, in avowing its cause, against the exceptions raised against it by prejudice and carnal conceit, by sensual appetites and passions, by temptation and worldly interest: there must be great humility, disposing us to a submission of our understanding, and a resignation of our will unto God, in admitting notions which debase haughty conceit, in espousing duties which repress sturdy humor: there must be much resolution and courage, in undertaking things very difficult, hazardous, and painful; much patience, in adhering to a profession, which exacteth so much pain, and exposeth to so much trouble: there must be great prudence, in applying our choice (among so many competitions and pretences claiming it) to that which is only good; in seeing through fallacious disguises, and looking over present appearances, so as to descry the just worth and the final consequence of things: there must, in fine, be a love of truth, and a liking of all virtue, which is so highly commended, and so strictly prescribed by the Christian doctrine.

These particulars, commending faith to us, I have already largely prosecuted; I shall only therefore now insist on the last head, concerning its effects, whereby (as the goodness of a tree is known by its fruits) the great excellency thereof will appear.

Its effects are of two sorts; one springing naturally from it, the other following it in way of recompense from Divine bounty: I shall only touch the first sort; because in this its virtue is most seen, as in the other its felicity.

Faith is naturally efficacious in producing many rare fruits; naturally, I say, not meaning to exclude supernatural grace, but supposing faith to be a fit instrument thereof; for 'God worketh in us to will, and to do,' but in a way suitable to our nature, employing such means as properly serve to incline and excite us unto good practice; and such is faith, supported and wielded by his grace; for indeed

Even in common life faith is the compass by which men steer practice, and the main spring of action, setting all the wheels of our activity on going; every man acteth with serious intention, and with vigor answerable to his persuasion of things, that they are worthy his pains, and attainable by his endeavors. What moveth the husbandman to employ so much care, toil, and expense in manuring his ground, in ploughing, in sowing, in weeding, in fencing it, but a persuasion that he shall reap a crop, which in benefit will answer all? What stirreth up the merchant to undertake tedious voyages over vast and dangerous seas, adventuring his stock, abandoning his ease, exposing his life to the waves, to rocks and shelves, to storms and hurricanes, to cruel pirates, to sweltry heats and piercing colds, but a persuasion that wealth is a very desirable thing, and that hereby he may acquire it? What induceth a man to conform unto strictest rules of diet and abstinence, readily to swallow down the most unsavory potions, patiently to endure cuttings and burnings, but a faith that he thereby shall recover or preserve health, that highly valuable good? From the same principle are all the carking, all the plodding, all the drudging, all the daring, all the scuffling in the world easily derivable. In like manner is faith the square and the source of our spiritual activity, disposing us seriously to undertake; earnestly, reso-

lutely, industriously, and constantly to pursue the designs o virtue and piety, brooking the pains and hardships, breaking through the difficulties and hazards which occur in religious practice; engaging us to the performance of duty, deterring us from the commission of sin.

What but faith, eyeing the prize, will quicken us 'to run patiently the race that is set before us?' what but faith, apprehending the crown, will animate us to 'fight stoutly the good fight?' what but faith, assuring the wages, will support us in working all the day with unwearied industry and patience? what can raise pious hope, what can kindle holy desire, what can spur on conscientious endeavor, but a faith of attaining worthy recompenses for doing well? what can impress an effectual dislike and dread of offending, but a faith of incurring grievous punishment and sad mischiefs thence?

In reason a strong and steady belief but of one point or two, would suffice to engage us on all duty, and to restrain us from all sin. Did only we believe the future judgment, with the results of it, that alone would be an effectual both spur and curb to us: for who believing that his soul then shall be laid bare, that his inmost thoughts and secretest purposes shall be disclosed unto the view of all the world, will presume to harbor in his breast any foul thought or base design? who believing that he shall then be obliged to render an account of every idle word, will dare to utter villanous blasphemies, wicked curses, fond oaths, profane jests, vile slanders or detractions, harsh censures, or bitter reproaches? who being persuaded that a rigorous amends will then be exacted from him for any wrong he doeth, will not be afraid with violence to oppress, or with fraud to circumvent his neighbor? who deeming himself accountable then for every talent and opportunity will find in his heart to squander away or misemploy his time, his power, his wealth, his credit, his wit, his knowlege, his advantages in any kind of doing God service? who knowing himself obnoxious to a sudden trial, whereat his estate, his reputation, his life, all his interest and welfare must lie at stake, will contentedly lose his mind in wanton sports or wild frolics? In fine, if we are really persuaded that presently after this short and transitory life we shall openly, in the face

of God, angels, and men, be arraigned at an impartial bar, where all our thoughts, our words, our actions shall most exactly be sifted and scanned; according to which cognisance a just doom shall be pronounced, and certainly executed on us; how must this needs engage us to be very sober and serious, very circumspect and vigilant over our mind, our tongue, our dealings, our conversation, our whole life!

Again, if a man firmly believeth that by a pious course of life he shall gain the present favor and friendship of the Almighty, with all the real goods whereof he is capable; and that hereafter he shall be rewarded for it with an eternal life in perfect rest, in glory, in joy, in beatitude unspeakable; that he shall obtain an incorruptible inheritance, a treasure that can never fail, a crown that will not fade, a kingdom that cannot be shaken; wherein he shall enjoy the blissful vision of God, smiling in love on him; the presence of his gracious Redeemer, embracing him with dear affection; the most delightful society of blessed angels, and 'just spirits made perfect;' a state of felicity, surpassing all words to express it, all thoughts to conceive it; of which the brightest splendors, and the choicest pleasures here can yield but a faint resemblance; how can he forbear earnestly to embrace and pursue such a course of practice! what zeal must such a persuasion inspire; what vigor must it rouse within him! who on any terms would forfeit the hopes of such a happiness? who would not be glad to undertake any pains, or endure any hardships for it?

And who likewise heartily is persuaded that by vicious conversation he shall incur the wrath of Almighty God, and stand obnoxious to the strokes of his severe justice; that persisting therein he infallibly must drop into the bottomless pit, into that utter darkness, that furnace of fire unquenchable, that lake of flaming brimstone; where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the immortal worm shall gnaw on his heart, and he must feel the pangs of a never-dying death; that state of most bitter remorse, of most horrid despair, of most forlorn disconsolateness, of continual and endless torment; wherein he shall be banished from the face of God, and by immutable destiny barred from all light, all ease, all solace; from any

glimpse of hope, from any respite of pain; the wretchedness of which condition not the sharpest pain of body, not the sorest anguish of mind, not the saddest distress here can anywise reach or represent; whoever, I say, is possessed with a belief of these things consequent on a wicked life, will he not thence be effectually scared from it? what bait of temptation shall allure him, what force shall drive him thereto? will he for a flash of pleasure, for a puff of fame, for a lump of pelf; will he in compliment or complaisance to others, in apish imitation or compliance with a fashion, out of mere wantonness, or in regard to some petty interest; will he in hope of any worldly good, or fear of any inconvenience here, suffer himself to be cast into that dismal state? will he not sooner go and shake a lion by the paw, sooner provoke an adder to bite him, sooner throw himself down a precipice, or leap into a caldron of burning pitch? Certainly in reason to believe such things, and to sin, can hardly be consistent.

Such a general influence is faith, looking with a provident eye on future rewards and consequences of things, apt to have on our practice: the which collaterally taking in the glorious attributes of God, the gracious performances of our Saviour, the beauty and sweetness of each divine precept, the manifold obligations and encouragements to duty, the whole latitude and harmony of evangelical truth, all tending to the recommendation of holiness, what efficacy must it needs have! how powerfully must it incite us to good practice!

We are told that faith doth 'purify our souls, and cleanse our hearts;' that is, our whole interior man, all the faculties of our soul; disposing them to an universal obedience and conformity to God's holy will; and so it is; for faith not only doth clear our understanding from its defects, (blindness, ignorance, error, doubt,) but it cleanseth our will from its vicious inclinations, (from stubborn, froward, wanton, giddy humors;) it freeth our affections from disorder and distemper, in tendency toward bad objects, and in pursuit of indifferent things with immoderate violence; it purgeth our conscience, or reflexive powers, from anxious fear, suspicion, anguish, dejection, despair, and all such passions which corrode and fret the soul: how it effecteth this we might declare; but we cannot better

set forth its efficacy and puissance, than by considering the special and immediate influence it plainly hath in the production of each virtue, or on the performance of every duty: 'Add to your faith virtue,' saith St. Peter; implying the natural order of things, and that if true faith precede, virtue will easily follow.

The chief of all virtues, piety, (comprising the love of God, fear and reverence of him, confidence in him, gratitude for his favors and mercies, devotion toward him, a disposition to worship and serve him,) seemeth according to reason inevitably consequent from it; for can we believe God superexcellent in all perfection, and immensely benign toward us; can we be persuaded that in free goodness he did create us, and doth continually preserve us in being; that his bounty hath conferred on us all our endowments of soul, and all our accommodations of life; that he hath a tender desire of our welfare, from which even our most heinous offences and provocations cannot divert him; that he most wonderfully hath provided for our happiness; in order thereto, when we had rebelled and revolted from him, sending down out of his bosom, from the top of celestial glory and bliss, his only dear Son, into this base and frail state, to sustain the infirmities of our nature, the inconveniences of a poor life, the pains of a bitter and shameful death, for our recovery from sin and misery; that with infinite patience he driveth on this gracious design, continually watching over us, attracting us to good, and reclaiming us from evil by his grace, notwithstanding our frequent and stiff reluctances thereto; can, I say, we heartily believe these points, and not love him? Can the eye of faith behold so lovely beauty, so ravishing sweetness in him, and the heart not be affected? Can we apprehend so many miracles of nature, of providence, of grace performed by him for our sake, and not be thankful to him? Can we likewise believe God infinitely powerful, infinitely just, infinitely pure, and withal not dread him, not adore him? Can we believe him most able, most willing, most ready to do us good, and not confide in him? or can we take him to be most veracious, most faithful, most constant, and not rely on his promises? Can we avow him to be our Maker, our Patron, our Lord, our Judge, and not deem ourselves much

obliged, much concerned to serve him? Can we believe that God in our need is accessible, that he calleth and inviteth us to him, that he is ever willing and ever ready to hear us, that he is by promise engaged to grant us whatever we do with humble fervency and constancy request; yet forbear to pray, or easily desist from it? Do we believe his omnipresence and omniscience; that he is with us wherever we go, doth know all we think, hear all we say, see all we do; and will not belief engage us to think honestly, to speak reverently, to act innocently and decently before him? Do we believe that God's commands do proceed from that will, to which rectitude is essential; from that wisdom, which infallibly discerneth what is just and fit; from that goodness, which will require from us nothing but what is best for us; from that unquestionable and uncontrollable authority, to which all things are subject, and must submit; will not this sufficiently engage us to obedience? Surely the real belief (such as we have about common things, apprehended by our reason or by our sense) of any such divine act or attribute, cannot fail to strike pious affection, and pious awe into us.

After piety, the next great virtue is charity, the which also is easily derived 'from a pure heart,' as St. Paul speaketh, 'and faith unfeigned;' it representing peculiar obligations and inducements thereto, from the most peremptory commands of God, from the signal recompenses annexed to that duty, from the strict relations between Christians, from the stupendous patterns of charity set before us. Who can withhold love from him, whom he believeth his brother, in a way far nobler than that of nature, so constituted by God himself, the common Father, by spiritual regeneration, and adoption of grace; whom he believeth born of the same heavenly seed, renewed after the same divine image, quickened by the same Holy Spirit; united to him not only in blood, but in soul; resembling him, not in temper of body or lineaments of face, but in conformity of judgment and practice; partner of the one inheritance, and destinated to lead a life with him through all eternity, in peaceful consortship of joy and bliss? Who can deny him love, whom he believeth out of the same miserable case by the same price redeemed into the same state of mercy? for whom he by faith vieweth

the common Saviour divesting himself of glory, pinching himself with want, wearying himself with labor, loaded with contumelies, groaning under pain, weltering in blood, and breathing out his soul, propounding all this as an example of our charity, and demanding it from us as the most special instance of our grateful obedience to him? What greater endearments can be imagined, what more potent incentives of love, what more indissoluble bands of friendship, than are these? Can such a believer forbear to wish his neighbor well, to have complacence in his good, to sympathise with his adversities, to perform all offices of kindness to him? Can he in the need of his brother 'shut up his bowels of compassion,' or withhold his hand from relieving him? Can a man know that God requireth this practice as the noblest fruit of our faith, and most acceptable part of our obedience, which he hath promised to crown with most ample rewards; can he believe that God will recompense his 'labor of love' with everlasting rest, and for a small expense of present goods will bestow immense treasures in the other world, and yet abstain from charitable beneficence? Who can forbear sowing, that believeth he shall reap so plentiful a crop; or abstain from dealing in that heavenly trade, whereby he is assured to be so vast a gainer?

In like manner is faith productive of meekness, in comporting with injuries, discourtesies, neglects, and provocations of any kind: for who can be fiercely angry, who can entertain any rancorous grudge or displeasure against him, whom he believeth his brother, and that on so many accounts he is obliged to love him? Who that believeth God hath pardoned him so much, and doth continually bear so many wrongs, so many indignities from him, will not in conscience and gratitude toward God, and in compliance with so great an example, bear with the infirmities of his neighbor? Who can look on the pattern of his Saviour, patiently enduring so many grievous affronts, without a disposition to imitate him, and to do the like for his sake? Who that taketh himself for a child of God, a citizen of heaven, an heir of eternal glory, can be so much concerned in any trivial accident here; can design to have his passion stirred for any worldly respect? as if his honor could be im-

paired, or his interest suffer diminution by any thing said or done here below.

Again, faith is the mother of sincerity, that comprehensive virtue, which seasoneth all other virtues, and keepeth them sound: for it assuring us that an all-seeing eye doth view our heart, doth encompass our paths, is present to all our closest retirements; that 'all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' how vain must it appear to us anywise to dissemble, or prevaricate, speaking otherwise than we think, acting otherwise than we pretend, seeming otherwise than we are; concealing our real intents, or disguising them under masks of deceitful appearance! If we believe that we shall be judged, not according to the opinions of men concerning us, or our port and garb in this world, but as we are in ourselves, and according to strictest truth; that in the close of things we shall be set forth in our right colors and complexion, all varnish being wiped away; that all our thoughts, words, and deeds shall be exposed to most public censure; that hypocrisy will be a sore aggravation of our sin, and much increase our shame; how can we satisfy ourselves otherwise than in the pure integrity of our heart, and clear uprightness of our dealing?

Likewise the admirable virtue of humility, or sobriety of mind, doth sprout from faith; informing us that we have nothing of our own to boast of, but that all the good we have, we can do, we may hope for, are debts we owe to God's pure bounty and mercy; prompting us to assume nothing to ourselves, but to ascribe all the honor of our endowments, of our performances, of our advantages unto God; keeping us in continual dependence on God for the succors of his providence and his grace; representing to us our natural weakness, vileness, and wretchedness, together with the adventitious defects and disadvantages from our wilful misbehaviour, the unworthiness of our lives, the many heinous sins we have committed, and the grievous punishments we have deserved.

He who by the light of faith doth see that he came naked into the world, heir to nothing but the sad consequences of the original apostasy; that he is a worm, crawling on earth, feeding

on dust, and tending to corruption; that he liveth only by reprieve from that fatal sentence, 'The day thou sinnest thou shalt die;' that he was a caitiff wretch, a mere slave to sin, a forlorn captive of hell; and that all his recovery thence, or capacity of a better state, is wholly due to mercy; that he subsisteth only on alms, and hath nothing but his sins and miseries which he may call his own; he that believeth these things, what conceit can he have of himself, what confidence in his own worth, what complacency in his estate?

Faith also doth engage to the virtue of temperance; discovering not only the duty, but the necessity thereof, in regard to our state, which is a state of continual exercise and strife; wherefore as wrestlers with many strong adversaries, as racers for a noble prize, we by good diet and constant labor must keep ourselves in heart, in temper, in breath to perform those combats; according to that of St. Paul, 'Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.'

Again, faith is productive of contentedness in our state: for how is it possible that he, who is fully satisfied that God appointeth his station, and allotteth his portion to each one; that all occurrences depend on his will, and are managed by his providence, should take any thing amiss; as if it could hap better, than as infinite goodness pleaseth, and infinite wisdom determineth? How can he, that believeth God most powerful and able, most kind and willing, ever present and ready to help him, be in any case disconsolate, or despair of seasonable relief? What can discompose him, who knoweth himself, if he pleaseth, immovably happy; that his best good is secure from all attacks, and beyond the reach of any misfortune; that desiring what is best, he cannot fail of his desire; that (himself excepted) all the world cannot considerably wrong or hurt him?

He that is assured, those precepts ('Be careful for nothing;' 'Cast all your burden on God;' 'Be content with such things as ye have') were not given to mock and gull us; that those declarations and promises ('There is no want to them that fear God;' 'No good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly;' 'There shall no evil happen to the just;' 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted:' 'All things work together for good to them who love God;' 'Seek ye first the

kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you') were seriously made, and will surely be performed, how loose must his mind be from all solicitude and anxiety! how steady a calm, how sweet a serenity will that faith spread over his soul, in regard to all worldly contingencies!

It will also beget a cheerful tranquillity of mind and peace of conscience in regard to our future state; that which St. Paul calleth 'all joy and peace in believing;' which the Apostle to the Hebrews termeth 'the confidence and rejoicing of hope;' of which St. Peter saith, 'Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:' for he that is persuaded that God (in whose disposal his fortune and felicity are) is reconciled and kindly affected toward him; that he doth concern himself in designing and procuring his salvation; that to purchase the means thereof for him, the Son of God purposely came down, and suffered death; that an act of oblivion is past, and a full remission of sins exhibited to him, if he will embrace it; that now 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;' and that, 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God;' that blessing is his portion, and that an eternal heritage of joy is reserved for him, what ease must he find in his conscience, what comfort must possess his heart! how effectually will that of the prophet be accomplished in him, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee!'

Again, it is faith which breedeth the courage, and upholdeth the patience requisite to support us in our spiritual course.

It doth inspire courage, prompting to attempt the bravest enterprises, disposing to prosecute them resolutely, and enabling happily to achieve them: for he that believeth himself in his undertakings backed by Omnipotence, and that, as St. Paul, 'he can do all things through Christ strengthening him,' what should he fear to set on, what difficulty should keep him off, what hazard should dismay him? he that knoweth himself, by reason of the succor attending him, infinitely to overmatch all opposition, whom should he not dare to encounter? May he not well say with David; 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life,

of whom shall I be afraid?' Let all the world, let earth and hell combine to invade him, how can that mate his spirit, if he believe they cannot overthrow him, or hurt him, being secured by the invincible protection of him, to whose will all things do bow; in comparison to whom nothing is puissant, beside whom nothing is really formidable; seeing none but he can kill, none can touch the soul?

If we be armed with the spiritual panoply, having our head covered 'with the helmet of salvation,' our heart guarded with 'the breast-plate of righteousness,' our 'loins girt about with truth,' our 'feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' all our body sheltered by the impenetrable 'shield of faith;' and wielding in our hands by faith the 'penetrant two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;' what assaults may we not sustain, what foes shall we not easily repel?

The most redoubtable enemy we have is our own flesh, which, with a mighty force of violent appetites and impetuous passions, is ever struggling with our reason, and warring against our soul; yet it faith alone dareth to resist, and is able to quell; opposing to the present delights of sense the hopes of future joy; quashing transitory satisfactions by the fears of endless torment.

The world is another powerful enemy; ever striving, by its corrupt principles, by its bad examples, by its naughty fashions, by its menaces of persecution, damage, and disgrace, by its promises of vain honor, base profit, and foul pleasure, to overthrow and undo us; but a resolute faith will defeat its attempts; for, 'He,' saith St. John, 'that is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:' the faith of a better world will defend us from the frowns and the flatteries of this; the riches, glories, and joys of heaven, thereby presented to our minds, will secure us from being enchanted with the wealth, splendors, and pleasures of earth.

Another fierce adversary is the cursed fiend; who ever, 'like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking to devour us,' or like a treacherous snake lieth in wait to bite us; raising panic fears to daunt and affright us; laying subtle trains of temptation to

abuse and seduce us; but him by resistance we may easily put to flight, for, 'Resist the devil,' saith St. James, 'and he will flee from you;' and how we must resist him St. Peter telleth us, 'Whom resist steadfast in faith;' and St. Paul also, 'Above all,' saith he, 'taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one:' if we hold forth this glittering shield, it will dazzle his sight, and damp his courage; being not able to endure its lustre, or stand its opposition, he will instantly retire; fearing that by our victory over his temptations (through reliance on God's help, and adherence to his truth) our reward shall be heightened, and his torment (the torment of improsperous envy and baffled malice) be increased.

Faith also will arm us with patience to endure whatever events shall be dispensed with alacrity and comfort; lightening the most heavy burdens imposed on us, sweetening the most distasteful occurrences incident to us: for,

He who is persuaded that by any damage here sustained for conscience toward God, he shall become a huge gainer, 'receiving,' as the gospel promiseth, 'an hundred fold, and inheriting eternal life,' what will he not gladly lose? will he not willingly put forth all he hath in this most profitable usury? will he not, as those Hebrews did, 'take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing that he hath in heaven a better and an enduring substance?'

He who believeth that in regard to any disgrace cast on him for his virtue, he shall be honored by God, and crowned with heavenly glory, will he not in a manner be proud and ambitious of such disgrace? will he not, as the Apostles did, 'rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.'

He who trusteth that for a little pains taken in God's service, he shall receive πολὺν μισθὸν, 'abundant wages,' far exceeding the merit of his labor, will he not cheerfully bear any toil or drudgery therein?

He who, with St. Paul, 'computeth that the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed;' and that 'those light momentary afflictions do work for us a far more exceeding

weight of glory;' will they not indeed be light unto him; will he not feel them lying on him as a few straws or feathers?

He who conceiveth our Lord's word true, that 'by losing his life he shall find it,' or that death shall become to him a door into a happy immortality, would he not gladly on such terms be 'killed all the day long,' and 'be always delivered unto death for Jesus?'

He who by faith is assured that any disasters befalling him are not inflictions of wrath, but expressions of love toward him, by God in kindness dispensed as trials of his faith, as exercises of his virtue, as occasions of his acquiring more plentiful rewards, how can he be disgusted at them, or discomposed by them? why should he not rather accept them as favors, as felicities, with a thankful and joyful heart; 'counting it,' as St. James adviseth, 'all joy, when he falleth into divers temptations?'

In fine, it is faith alone which can plant in us that which is the root of all contentedness and all patience; a just indifference and unconcernedness about all things here: it alone can untack our minds and affections from this world, rearing our souls from earth, and fixing them in heaven; for if we are persuaded there is a state of life infinitely more desirable than the best condition here; if we believe there are things attainable by us, incomparably better than any which this world affordeth, in respect to which all these glories are but smoke, all these riches are but dirt, all these delights are but dreams, all these businesses are but triflings, all these substances are but shadows; how in our minds can we prize, how in our affections can we cleave unto these things; how then can we find in our hearts to spend on them more care or pain than is needful!

He that taketh himself here to be out of his element, that he is but 'a stranger and sojourner on earth,' that he 'hath here no abiding city,' no country, no house, no land, no treasure, no considerable interest, but that he is merely wayfaring, in passage toward his true home and heavenly country; 'the Jerusalem above,' whereof he is a citizen, where his grand concerns do lie, where he hath reserved for him immovable possessions

and unvaluable treasures; where he is designed to enjoy most noble privileges and most illustrious dignities in the court of the great King; how can he have his heart here sticking in this earthly clay, entangled with the petty cares, amused with the sorry entertainments of this life? how can he otherwise than with St. Paul be dead, and 'crucified to this world?' how can he withhold his mind from soaring thither in contemplation, and in affection dwelling there, whither his desires and hopes do all tend, where his joy and felicity are found, where the great objects of his esteem and love do reside?

But you will perhaps interpose, and say; These are indeed fine sayings, but where do such effects appear? who, I pray, doth practise according to these notions? where is that gallant to be found, who doth work so great exploits? where may we discern that height of piety, that tenderness of charity, that meek comportment with injuries and affronts, that clear sincerity, that depth of humility, that strictness of temperance, that perfect contentedness, and undisturbed calmness of mind, that stoutness of courage and stiffness of patience, which you talk of as the undoubted issues of faith? who is the man that with such glee doth hug afflictions, or biddeth adversity so welcome to his home? where dwell they who so little regard this world, or so much affect the other? do we not see men run as if they were wild after preferment, wealth, and pleasure? what do they else, but scrape and scramble and scuffle for these things? doth not every man moan the scantness of his lot, doth not every man flinch at any trouble, doth not every one with all his might strive to rid himself of any thing disgustful to his sense or fancy? Are not therefore such encomiums of faith mere speculations, or brave rhodomontades of divinity?

The objection, I confess, is a shrewd one; but I must reply to it: you say, Where are such effects, where are such men? I ask then, where is faith, where are believers? show me the one, and I will show you the other: if such effects do not appear, it is no argument that faith cannot produce them, but a sign that faith is wanting; as if a tree doth not put forth in due season, we conclude the root is dead; if a fountain yield no streams, we suppose it dried up: 'Show me,' saith St. James,

'thy faith by thy works;' implying that if good works do not shine forth in the conversation, it is suspicious there is no true faith in the heart; for such faith is not a feeble weening, or a notion swimming in the head, it is not a profession issuing from the mouth, it is not following such a garb, or adhering to such a party, but a persuasion fixed in the heart by good reason, by firm resolution, by lively sense; it is 'with the heart,' as St. Paul saith, 'man believeth unto righteousness;' that is the faith we speak of, and to which we ascribe the production of so great and worthy effects: if a man wanteth that, attested by practice suitable, though he know all the points exactly, though he readily will say amen to every article of the creed, though he wear all the badges of a Christian, though he frequent the congregations, and comply with the forms of our religion, yet is he really an infidel: for is he not an infidel who denieth God? and is he not such a renegado who liveth impiously? he is so in St. Paul's account; for, 'They profess,' saith he of such persons, 'that they know God, but in works they deny him;' and, 'He is not a Jew,' saith the same Apostle, (he is not a Christian, may we by parity of reason affirm,) 'who is one outwardly; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and faith is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God:' we may attribute to a barren conceit, or to a formal profession, the name of faith, but it is in an equivocal or wide sense; as a dead man is called a man, or a dry stick resting in the earth a tree; for so 'faith,' saith St. James, 'without works is dead;' is indeed but a trunk, or carcass of faith, resembling it in outward shape, but void of its spirit and life.

To our infidelity therefore, that overspreading vice; to the unsincerity, or deadness of our faith, the great defects of our practice are to be imputed; that is the grand source from which impiety doth so overflow; that so few instances of sprightly virtue are visible, may be a sign the time is the same, or very like to that, of which our Lord saith, 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?'

But if such effects can now rarely be found, yet time hath been when they were more rife, scarce any time hath been quite destitute of them; every age since the foundation of

things may have tokens and trophies to show of faith's victorious efficacy; so many actions as there have been truly great and glorious, so many gallant feats have been achieved by faith: if we survey the lives of the ancient patriarchs, of the prophets, of the apostles, of the martyrs and confessors of true religion, their faith in all their works is most conspicuous.

Faith recommended that excellent sacrifice of Abel to divine acceptance, and advanced him to the rank of first martyr for piety.

On the wings of faith did Enoch mount to heaven, snatching the reward due to his faithful, and therefore well-pleasing obedience.

Faith preserved Noah from two mighty deluges, one of sin, the other of water overflowing the earth; by it he stemmed the torrent of the one, and rode on the back of the other; it encouraged him to be a preacher of righteousness against the grain, and a practiser of it against the fashion of the world, not regarding the common hatred and envy which he did incur thereby; it moved him to undertake that great and strange work of building the ark, for a sanctuary and seminary of mankind; the type of that spiritual vessel, by embarking into which through faith we are saved from utter ruin.

Faith disposed Abraham to forsake his country and home, his estate, his kindred, following divine conduct he knew not whither; to wander abroad and sojourn among barbarous strangers: faith inclined him, at God's command, to sacrifice his only son, a goodly youth in the flower of his age and hopes, worthily most dear unto him; the son of his old age, and the comfort thereof, given to him by miracle and in special favor; the prop of his family, and the heir of promise, by whom his seed was to be propagated, and his memory to flourish; him was he ready in obedience with his own hand to slay, quelling nature and his bowels, thwarting his own hopes, defying all semblances of contradiction, or clashing between the commands and promises of God.

Faith, through the rudest efforts of envy and malice, through the dismal calamities of exile and slavery, through hideous snares of temptation, through villanous slanders, through loathsome prisons and fetters of iron, all along sustained with admi-

rable moderation and presence of mind, did rear up Joseph to the helm of that great kingdom.

The same inclined Moses to exchange the dignities and delights of a court for a state of vagrancy and servility; it heartened him to outbrave the invincible obstinacy of a mighty prince; it steeled him with patience to conduct for the space of forty years, through a wild desert, a most perverse and mutinous herd of people.

Faith was mother of that renowned patience, which exhausted Satan's quiver, spent all his artillery, and wore out his invention in suggesting mischiefs; 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' was the rock, on which that unshakeable patience of Job was founded.

That pricked the ruddy stripling forward, naked and unarmed, with undaunted heart and countenance, to invade the monster of Gath, that tower of flesh, swelling with rage and pride, and all fenced with brass and steel; 'Thou cómest to me,' said he, 'with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts:' there lay his confidence, thence sprung his admirable courage.

To this the bold attempts, and the glorious victories of Joshua, of Gideon, of Barak, of Jephtha, of Samson, of Jonathan, of the Maccabees, are worthily ascribed, who with small forces, on great disadvantages, did assault, did vanquish mighty enemies and oppressors.

This inflamed the zeal of Elias, by which he alone did check and control the degenerate follies of his nation, surmounting the indignation of princes which favored them; it fed him in the wilderness by the purveyance of ravens; it framed the wheels of that fiery chariot, which transported him into heaven.

This made Jeremy, with like zeal and courage, dare to carry most unwelcome news and unpleasant messages to an outrageous people, not daunted by their angry menaces or cruel misusages; 'his feet sunk into the mire,' but faith bore up his heart above all discouragement.

This saved the conscience of those three brave youths clear from that impiety into which barbarous violence would have driven them, so that neither the fury of that great monarch nor his gaping furnace could terrify them into sin; faith putting into

their mouths those manful words, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and 'he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image, which thou hast set up:' their faith carried them undaunted into the flames, and kept them untouched within them; so that they became as gold not wasted, but tried and purified in the furnace.

Neither could a danger no less terrible scare the noble Daniel from his devotions; his faith did 'stop the lions' mouths;' and, 'he,' saith the text, 'was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found on him, because he trusted in his God.'

Such exploits of spiritual prowess were achieved by an Old Testament faith, relying on God's attributes and providence, although wanting a clear revelation of the promises, which then lay wrapped up in mysteries and shadows; but more heroical acts of fortitude and patience did the bright sunshine of grace and glory on the minds of our apostles and primitive saints produce: animated by faith, a little troop of them marched out with resolution to attack all the powers of hell, and to beat down the kingdom of darkness, to dispatch all the prejudices and errors of mankind, and to subdue the world to the obedience of Christ; so armed, successfully did they knock down and trample on all opposition to their glorious designs; they defeated all the secular power and policy, they baffled all the wit, the learning, the eloquence, which stood in their way, or gave them resistance; they triumphed over persecutions, and in regard to all sufferings were more than conquerors; to forsake and forfeit all they had was their gain; to have nothing was their wealth; to incur disgraces was their glory; to be in continual labor and travail was their ease; fastings, hunger, and thirst, were their pleasure, their feast, their luxury; prisons were chapels to them, in which they preached, and prayed, and sang praises to God; their joy was to suffer; to receive stripes, and undergo torments, was their triumph and their glory; they constantly defied, they often courted death.

That they were able to perform such prodigious acts, and to

endure things so insupportable, was not from a stupid insensibility of things, from a sturdiness of spirit, or stiffness of humor; but from a true magnanimity inspired by faith; because they were persuaded of God's will, because they confided in God's help, because they relied on God's word, because they did expect rewards from God able to satisfy for all their pains and losses; this made them to undertake so bold enterprises, and carried them with insuperable constancy through all; hence were they glad to abandon their ease and pleasure, to prostitute their honor and reputation, to part with their substance, to venture their safety, to sacrifice their lives for God's truth; 'Therefore do we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe,' is the short account which St. Paul rendereth of it: and infallibly the like effects will faith produce, wherever it is found, in a degree proportionable to its sincerity and strength.

'A grain of faith,' our Saviour saith, 'is able to remove mountains;' that is, to accomplish things in appearance very strange and difficult: and, 'To him that believeth all things are possible,' saith the same mouth of truth; and, 'He,' saith our Lord again, 'that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater works than these shall he do.' If this be true in reference to works concerning the frame of nature, it is surely no less true in regard to those which lie within the more proper sphere of faith, to moral and spiritual operations: if faith can obtain the help of God, enabling to transfer a mountain, it also can procure his grace disposing to restrain an appetite, or repress a passion.

Now that which is in itself so worthy and lovely, which is attended with so good consorts, which is the daughter of so excellent causes, the sister of so great virtues, the parent of so admirable effects, how can it otherwise than be very precious, very laudable, very acceptable? how can we at all wonder that it should be graced with such commendation, and crowned with such rewards?

Let us therefore (to conclude) be exhorted, if we do want it, to endeavor the acquist of it, by all proper means, (by serious contemplation and study, by prayer to God, by voiding all ob-

structions of it:) if we have it, to hold it fast, to cherish it, to improve it, as by all good ways, so especially by good practice; that we may produce the good fruits, and obtain the happy rewards thereof, through the mercies of God in Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom for ever be all praise.

'Now the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON IV.

ROMANS, CHAP. V.—VERSE 1.

THE word *therefore* implies the text to be a conclusion, by way of inference, resulting from the precedent discourse: importance of the text: manner in which it should be treated described. Here the notion only of such faith as is proper to this place is insisted on; in order to which inquiry some useful observations are laid down.

1. It is observed that faith, or belief, in the vulgar acceptation, signifies an earnest opinion or persuasion of mind, concerning the truth of some matter propounded, whether it be one single proposition, or a system of propositions: instances given.

2. Whereas frequently some person or single thing is represented *verbo tenus* as the object of faith, this does not alter the notion first mentioned; for it is only a figurative manner of speaking: thus when the Jews were required to believe in Moses, it is meant, in the truth of his divine revelation: this enlarged on.

3. The word *belief* is by a kind of *synecdoche* so commonly extended in signification, as to imply whatever by a kind of necessity, natural or moral, doth result from it: this explained and enlarged on.

4. It may be observed, more nearly to the present purpose, that the faith here spoken of, without any adjunct or limitation, is often set down with terms annexed, explaining and determining it; being sometimes styled *the faith of Christ, the belief of the gospel, the believing, hearing, receiving the word*

of God, &c. The result of which is, that by this faith (as to the first and primary sense) is the being truly and firmly persuaded that Jesus was what he professed to be, and what his Apostles testified, &c. Such a faith shown to be, in its kind and order, apt and sufficient to promote God's design of saving us, and to render us capable of his favor, &c. It may be observed in the history concerning our Lord and his Apostles, that no other faith was required by them from their converts: this also was the common and current notion of faith among the ancient Christians.

5. But more particularly this faith not only denotes precisely and abstractedly such acts of mind, opinions, and persuasions concerning the truth of matters specified, but also (according to the meaning of those who use the word) such acts of will, as, supposing those persuasions real, are naturally consequent on them, and in a manner coherent with them: this explained and enlarged on.

6. But farther, to prevent mistakes and remove objections, it may be observed that this faith hath, though not an adequate, yet a peculiar respect to that part of Christian truth, which concerns the merciful intentions of God toward mankind, and the gracious performances of our Saviour in accomplishing them, &c.

7. Moreover, this faith relates only to propositions revealed by God, and not to others concerning particular matters of fact, subject to private conscience or experience; nor to any conclusions depending on such propositions: for instance, it is a part of this faith to believe that God is merciful and gracious, and disposed to pardon every repentant sinner, &c.; but the persuasion that God doth love me, or hath pardoned my sins, &c. may, as my circumstances may be, not be my duty: this topic enlarged on. That this faith doth not essentially include a respect to such particular propositions, appears from hence, that faith is in holy Scripture represented as preceding God's

especial benevolence, to his remission of sins, to his accepting and justifying our persons: it is a previous condition, &c.

That notion shown to be still less right, which defines faith to be a firm and certain knowlege of God's eternal good-will towards us particularly, and that we shall be saved, &c.; a notion taught by Calvin in the beginning of the Reformation.

That notion plainly supposes the truth of the doctrine, that no man being once in God's favor can ever quite lose it; which is shown to subvert the notion itself.

It may also be added, that, according to this Calvinistic notion, before the late alterations in Christendom, scarcely any man was a believer; for before that time it hardly appears that any one did believe, as the Calvinists do, that a man cannot fall from grace. St. Augustine himself (who is supposed to favor them on other occasions) shown to oppose them here.

But there is another notion of faith, which, if it be not so plainly false as the preceding one, seems more intricate and obscure: namely, that faith is not an assent to propositions of any kind, but a recumbency, leaning, resting on; an adherency to the person of Christ, or an apprehending and applying to ourselves his righteousness. This notion shown to be obscure and false. Conclusion.

I Believe, &c.

SERMON IV.

OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

ROMANS, CHAP. V.—VERSE 1.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

'THEREFORE;' that word implies the text to be a conclusion (by way of inference, or of recapitulation) resulting from the precedent discourse; it is indeed the principal conclusion, which (as being supposed a peculiar and a grand part of the Christian doctrine, and deserving therefore a strong proof and clear vindication) St. Paul designed by several arguments to make good. On the words being of such importance, I should so treat, as first to explain them, or to settle their true sense; then to make some practical application of the truths they contain.

As to the explicatory part, I should consider first, what the faith is, by which we are said to be justified; 2. what being justified doth import; 3. how by such faith we are so justified; 4. what the peace with God is, here adjoined to justification; 5. what relation the whole matter bears to our Lord Jesus Christ; or how through him being justified, we have peace with God; in the prosecution of which particulars it would appear, who the persons justified are, and who justifies us; with other circumstances incident.

I shall at this time only insist on the first particular, concerning the notion of faith proper to this place; in order to the resolution of which inquiry, I shall lay down some useful observations: and,

1. First, I observe that faith, or belief, in the vulgar acception, doth signify (as we have it briefly described in Aristotle's Topics*) a *σφοδρὰ ὑπόληψις*, an earnest opinion or persuasion of mind concerning the truth of some matter propounded. Such an opinion being produced by or grounded on some forcible reason, (either immediate evidence of the matter, or sense and experience, or some strong argument of reason, or some credible testimony; for whatever we assent unto, and judge true on any such grounds and inducements, we are commonly said to believe,) this is the popular acception of the word; and according thereto I conceive it usually signifies in holy Scripture; which being not penned by masters of human art or science, nor directed to persons of more than ordinary capacities or improvements, doth not intend to use words otherwise than in the most plain and ordinary manner.

Belief therefore in general, I suppose, denotes a firm persuasion of mind concerning the truth of what is propounded; whether it be some one single proposition, (as when Abraham believed that 'God was able to perform what he had promised;' and Sarah, that 'God, who had promised, was faithful,') or some system of propositions, as when we are said to 'believe God's word,' (that is, all which by his prophets was in his name declared;) to 'believe the truth,' (that is, all the propositions taught in the true religion as so;) to 'believe God's commandments,' (that is, the doctrines in God's law to be true, and the precepts thereof to be good;) to 'believe the gospel,' (that is, to be persuaded of the truth of all the propositions asserted or declared in the gospel.)

2. I observe, secondly, that whereas frequently some person, or single thing, is represented (*verbo tenus*) as the object of faith, this doth not prejudice, or in effect alter the notion I mentioned; for it is only a figurative manner of speaking, whereby is always meant the being persuaded, concerning the truth of

* Top. 4. 5.

some proposition, or propositions, relating to that person or thing: for otherwise it is unintelligible how any incomplex thing, as they speak, can be the complete or immediate object of belief. Beside simple apprehension (or framing the bare idea of a thing) there is no operation of a man's mind terminated on one single object; and belief of a thing surely implies more than a simple apprehension thereof: what it is, for instance, to believe this or that proposition about a man, or a tree, (that a man is such a kind of thing, that a tree hath this or that property,) is very easy to conceive; but the phrase believing a man, or a tree, (taken properly, or excluding figures,) is altogether insignificant and unintelligible: indeed to believe, πιστεύειν, is the effect τοῦ πεπεῖσθαι, of a persuasive argument, and the result of ratiocination; whence in Scripture it is commended, or discommended, as implying a good or bad use of reason. The proper object of faith is therefore some proposition deduced from others by discourse; as it is said, that 'many of the Samaritans believed in Christ, because of the woman's word, who testified that he told her all that ever she did;' or as St. Thomas 'believed, because he saw;' or as when it is said, that 'many believed on our Lord's name, beholding the miracles which he did:' when then, for example, the Jews are required to believe Moses, (or to believe in Moses, after the Hebrew manner of speaking,) it is meant, to be persuaded of the truth of what he delivered, as proceeding from divine revelation; or to believe him to be what he professed himself, a messenger or prophet of God. So 'to believe the prophets,'* or in the Prophets, (בְּנְבִיאָיו) was to be persuaded concerning the truth of what they uttered in God's name, (that the doctrines were true, the commands were to be obeyed, the threats and promises should be performed, the predictions should be accomplished: 'to believe all which the prophets did say,' as our Saviour speaks; 'to believe all things written in the prophets,' as St. Paul.) So to 'believe God's works' (a phrase we have in the Psalms) signifies, to be persuaded that those works did proceed from God, or were the effects of his good providence: to 'believe in man' (that which is so often prohibited and dis-

* 2 Chron. xx. 20.

suaded) denotes the being persuaded that man in our need is able to relieve and succor us: lastly, 'to believe in God' (a duty so often enjoined and inculcated) is to be persuaded that God is true in whatever he says; faithful in performance of what he promises; perfectly wise, powerful, and good; able and willing to do us good: the being persuaded, I say, of all these propositions, or such of them as suit the present circumstances and occasion, is to believe in God: thus, in fine, to believe on a person, or thing, is only a short expression (figuratively) denoting the being persuaded of the truth of some proposition relating, in one way or other, to that person or thing, (which way is commonly discernible by considering the nature, or state of such a person, or such a thing;) the use of which observation may afterward appear.

3. I observe, thirdly, that (as it is ordinary in like cases concerning the use of words) the word *belief* is by a kind of synecdoche (or metonymy, if you please) so commonly extended in signification, as, together with such a persuasion as we spoke of, to imply whatever by a kind of necessity, natural or moral, doth result from it; so comprehending those acts of will, those affections of soul, and those deeds, which may be presumed consequent on such a persuasion: for instance, when God commanded Abraham to forsake his country, promising him a happy establishment in the land of Canaan, with a perpetual blessing on his posterity; Abraham was persuaded concerning the power and fidelity of God, and concerning the truth of what was promised and foretold; in that persuasion his faith, according to the first, proper, and restrained sense, did consist: but because from such a persuasion (being sincere, and strong enough) there did naturally and duly result a satisfaction, or acquiescence in the matter enjoined as best to be done; a choice and resolution to comply with God's appointment; an effectual obedience; a cheerful expectation of a good issue thereon; therefore all those dispositions of soul and actions concurring become expressed by the name of faith, (that first persuasion being the principle and root of them:) for it is for his faith that he is highly commended; it is for it that he obtained so favorable an approbation and acceptance from God. Yet supposing Abraham to have had such a persuasion concerning God; and

yet to have disliked what God required, or to have resolved against doing it, or to have indeed disobeyed, or to have disregarded the happy success; it is plain that Abraham as to the whole matter deserved rather much blame than any commendation; and would not on that account have had 'righteousness imputed to him,' and have been 'called the friend of God:' when therefore his faith is so magnified, that word comprehends not his bare persuasion only, but all those concomitants thereof, which if they had not gone along therewith, it had been a proof that such a persuasion was not sincere, (not *ἀνυπόκριτος πίστις*, 'an undissembled faith;' such as St. Paul commends in Timothy,) or not strong enough, (not *ἀδιάκριτος πίστις*, 'an undoubting faith,' (but a weak, a small, a dead, an ineffectual faith; which come under blame and reproof; but the effect showed that he did not, as St. Paul says, *ἀσθενεῖν τῇ πίστει*, had not a weak, or sickly faith; nor 'staggered at the promise of God;' but 'was strong in faith, giving glory to God;' which he did not only in believing his word, but in suiting his affections, and yielding obedience thereto: (*πίστει ὑπήκουσεν ἐξελθεῖν*) 'by faith he obeyed, so as to forsake his country,' says the Apostle to the Hebrews; and faith thus taken is not only a single act of a man's understanding, or will, but a complex of many dispositions and actions diffused through divers faculties of a man, denoting the whole complication of good dispositions and actions relating to one matter; which attend on a true and earnest persuasion concerning it; right choice, submission, and satisfaction of mind, firm resolution, dutiful obedience, constant and cheerful hope, or the like.

4. I observe more nearly to our purpose, fourthly, that the faith here spoken of (being here and otherwhere put absolutely, or by itself, without any adjunct of limitation or distinction) is often set down with terms annexed thereto, explaining and determining it; being sometimes styled the faith of Christ, of Jesus, of God, (*τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τοῦ Θεοῦ,*) sometimes faith on Christ, (*εἰς Χριστὸν*, and *ἐπὶ Χριστὸν,*) faith in Christ, (*ἐν Χριστῷ,*) faith to Christ, to the Lord, to God, (*πιστεύειν τῷ Χριστῷ, τῷ Κυρίῳ, τῷ Θεῷ,*) faith on the name of Christ, (*εἰς ὄνομα,*) faith of his name, (*πίστις τοῦ ὀνόματος,*) faith to his name, (*τῷ ὀνόματι*:) which phrases, all question-

less denoting the same thing, do imply this faith to consist in being persuaded concerning the truth of some propositions chiefly relating to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, either as grounded on his authority, or appertaining to his person. Now what such propositions are, we may learn from other expressions, descriptions, or circumlocutions declaring the nature and quality of this faith: it is sometimes called 'the belief of the gospel,' (that is, of the whole system of doctrines, and laws, and promises, and prophecies taught, delivered, or declared by Christ, and his Apostles: 'Repent,' said St. John the Baptist, 'and believe the gospel,') 'the belief of the truth,' (that body of truth, signally so called, which was taught by the same authors,) the 'acknowlegement of the same truth,' (πιστὸς, and ἐπεγνωκὼς τὴν ἀλήθειαν are in St. Paul the same.) Equivalent to those descriptions of this faith are those expressions, which set it out by yielding assent (generally) to what our Lord Christ and his Apostles taught, or to some chief points of their doctrine, inferring the rest; the believing, hearing, receiving the word of God, of Christ, of the Apostles, the receiving Christ's testimony, and (which is the same) receiving Christ himself; coming unto Christ, (that is, as disciples to their Master, as servants to their Lord, as persons oppressed and enslaved to their Deliverer:) the believing (and knowing) that Jesus was sent by God, and came from him; the believing that Jesus was what he professed himself to be; the confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he which should come into the world; the King of Israel; that God raised him from the dead; by the belief of which one point, as involving the rest, St. Paul expresseth this faith: 'If thou,' saith he, 'shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe with thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'

The result, on considering all which expressions declaratory of the nature of this faith (for this surely is not different from that, which is so commonly otherwhere represented in our Saviour's and his Apostles' discourses and writings, as a great duty required of us; as a virtue (or act of virtue) highly commendable, as an especial instrument of our salvation, as a necessary condition prerequisite to our partaking the benefits and

privileges by divine favor conferred on Christians)—the result, I say, is this, that by this faith (as to the first and primary sense thereof) is understood the being truly and firmly persuaded in our minds, that Jesus was what he professed himself to be, and what the Apostles testified him to be; the Messias, by God designed, foretold, and promised to be sent into the world, to redeem, govern, instruct, and save mankind; our Redeemer and Saviour, our Lord and Master, our King and Judge; the great High Priest, and Prophet of God; the being assured of these, and all other propositions connexed with these; or, in short, the being thoroughly persuaded of the truth of that gospel which was revealed and taught by Jesus and his Apostles. That this notion is true, those descriptions of this faith, and phrases expressing it, do sufficiently show; the nature and reason of the thing doth confirm the same; for that such a faith is, in its kind and order, apt and sufficient to promote God's design of saving us, to render us capable of God's favor; to purge our hearts, and work that change of mind, which is necessary in order to the obtaining God's favor, and enjoying happiness; to produce that obedience, which God requires of us, and without which we cannot be saved; these things are the natural results of such a persuasion concerning those truths; as natural, as the desire and pursuit of any good doth arise from the clear apprehension thereof, or as the shunning of any mischief doth follow from the like apprehension: as a persuasion that wealth is to be got thereby, makes the merchant to undergo the dangers and pains of a long voyage, (verifying that, *Impiger extremos currit mercator ad Indos, Per mare pauperiem fugiens, per saxa, per ignes;*) as the persuasion that health may thereby be recovered, engages a man not only to take down the most unsavory potions, but to endure cuttings and burnings, (*ut valeas ferrum patieris et ignes;*) as a persuasion, that refreshment is to be found in a place, doth effectually carry the hungry person thither: so a strong persuasion that Christian religion is true, and the way of obtaining happiness, and of escaping misery, doth naturally produce a subjection of heart and an obedience thereto; and accordingly we see the highest of those effects which the gospel offers, or requires, are assigned to this faith, as results from it, or adjuncts thereof. Regeneration; 'Whosoever,' saith St.

John, 'believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.' Spiritual union with God; 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God:' 'If what ye have heard from the beginning abide in you, ye shall also abide in the Father and the Son.' The obtaining God's love; 'The Father loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from God.' Victory over the world; 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' Freedom from spiritual slavery, and becoming true disciples of Christ; 'If ye abide in my word, ye are truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.' Obtaining everlasting life; 'He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, (that is, who believeth my word, which is indeed the word of God, who sent me, and in whose name I speak,) hath everlasting life.' And, 'These things were written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing it, you may have life in his name.' Interest in God and Christ; 'He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he (οὗτος) hath the Father and the Son.' 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath eternal life.' Rising with Christ, (that is, as to capacity and right;) 'Buried with him in baptism, wherein you are risen with him through faith of the operation of God; who raised him from the dead.' Being saved; 'Whoever confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God; and in his heart believes that God raised him from the dead, shall be saved.' Lastly, being justified; for, St. Paul adjoins, 'a man believeth (in the manner before mentioned) to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' So we see that the chief of those excellent benefits, to the procuring of which faith (however understood) is anywise conducible, or requisite, do belong to the persuasion concerning evangelical truths. We may also observe in the history concerning our Lord, and his Apostles' proceedings toward persons, whom they had converted to Christianity, and did admit to a participation of the privileges thereof, that no other faith was by them required in order thereto: on such a persuasion appearing, they received them into the church, baptised them, pronounced unto them an

absolution from their sins, and a reception into God's favor. This was the faith of Martha, which gave her interest in the promise of eternal life: 'Every one,' said our Saviour to her, 'living, and believing in me, shall never die: Dost thou believe this? She saith unto him, Yes, Lord, I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.' This was the faith for which our Saviour commends St. Peter, and pronounces him happy. On appearance of this faith, St. Peter baptised and admitted into the church the three thousand persons whom he had converted. ('Then,' says the text, 'they who gladly (or willingly) received his word (that is, were persuaded of the truth of that doctrine, which is before set down concerning our Lord) were baptised; and the same day were added (to the church) about three thousand souls.') On the like faith the Samaritans were baptised, (ὅτε ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ, 'when they gave credence to Philip's doctrine.') And on the same account did the same evangelist say it was lawful to baptise the Eunuch, and accordingly did perform it: 'If,' saith Philip, 'thou believest with thy whole heart, it is lawful, (or thou mayest be baptised.) He answering said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he baptised him.' This was the faith on which St. Paul baptised Lydia, 'when she had yielded assent unto (so προσέχειν doth import in the Acts; not only προσέχειν νοῦν to yield attention, but προσέχειν πίστιν to give assent unto) the things spoken by St. Paul.' Thus also of those Jews in another place of the Acts, when St. Paul had 'opened and alleged, out of the Scriptures, that Christ was to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that Jesus was the Christ,' it is said τινὲς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπείσθησαν, καὶ προσεκληρώθησαν, 'were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas,' (that is, were received into Christian communion with them.) The same is intimated in other passages of the apostolical history; by all which it appears that the Apostles' method was to declare and inculcate the main points of the Christian history and doctrine, attesting to the one, and proving the other by testimonies and arguments proper to that purpose; and whoever of their hearers declared himself persuaded of the truth of what they taught, that he did heartily assent thereto, and resolved to profess and practice accord-

ingly, him, without more to do, they presently baptised, and instated him in the privileges appertaining to Christianity; or, in St. Paul's language, did justify them, according to their subordinate manner, as the ministers of God. And thus did the primitive church practise after the Apostles; as Justin the Martyr fully relates of it:—*ὅσοι ἂν πεισθῶσι, καὶ πιστεύωσιν ἀληθῆ ταῦτα τὰ ὑφ' ἡμῶν διδασκόμενα, καὶ λεγόμενα εἶναι, καὶ ποιεῖν οὕτως δύνασθαι ὑπισχῶνται, &c.—ἄγονται ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἔνθα ὕδωρ ἐστὶ, καὶ τρόπον ἀναγεννήσεως, ὃν καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτοὶ ἀνεγεννήθημεν, ἀναγεννῶνται*—Apol. 2. 'Whoever,' saith he, 'are persuaded, and do believe these things by us taught, and said to be true, and undertake that they can live so according to them; —are brought thither, where water is, and are regenerated after the same manner as we have been regenerated.' I farther add, that even this faith is expressed to be the effect of divine grace and inspiration; for when St. Peter had confessed that 'Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God,' our Saviour tells him, 'that flesh and blood had not revealed that unto him, but his Father in heaven;' and, 'No man,' St. Paul tells us, 'can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost:' and, 'Every spirit, which confesseth Jesus Christ to have been come in the flesh, is of God,' saith St. John. So that even this is a faith, in respect to which the Holy Ghost is called 'the Spirit of faith,' which is the 'fruit of the Spirit,' and 'the gift of God;' that which no man can have without God's drawing him, and teaching him; 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, that hath sent me, shall draw him (*ἑλκύσῃ αὐτόν.*) Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me:' to which it is ordinarily required, that God should open the heart, as he did Lydia's heart, 'to attend and assent unto what St. Paul taught:' neither doth the Scripture, as I conceive, attribute any thing unto faith, which doth not agree to this notion.

We might lastly adjoin, that this was the common and current notion of faith among the ancient Christians; neither do we, I suppose, meet with any other in their writings; all which things do abundantly confirm the truth thereof.

5. But I must farther observe particularly, (in correspondence to what was before more generally observed,) that this

faith doth not only denote precisely and abstractedly such acts of mind, such opinions and persuasions concerning the truth of matters specified, but doth also connote and imply (indeed comprehend according to the meaning of those who use the word) such acts of will, as, supposing those persuasions to be real and complete, are naturally consequent on them, and are in a manner necessarily coherent with them; a firm resolution constantly to profess and adhere unto the doctrine, of which a man is so persuaded; to obey all the laws and precepts, which it contains; forsaking in open profession, and in real practices, all principles, rules, customs inconsistent with those doctrines and laws; that which is called conversion, or returning to the Lord, (that is, leaving a course of rebellion, and disobedience to those laws, which the Lord in the gospel commands, and resolvedly betaking themselves to the observance of them,) πολύς τε ὄχλος πιστεύσας ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον, 'a great multitude,' it is said, 'believing, did return unto the Lord;' their faith did carry with it such a conversion. Hence this faith is styled πειθαρχεῖν Θεῷ, 'to obey God's command;' ὑπακούειν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, 'to obey the gospel;' ὑπακούειν τῇ πίστει, 'to obey the faith;' ὑποταγὴ τῆς ὁμολογίας εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ('subjection of professing the gospel of Christ,') 'with purpose of heart to adhere unto God; stipulation of a good conscience toward God,' (that which St. Peter intimates as a necessary concomitant of baptism, it being a sincere undertaking, and engaging one's self to obey God's commandments;) in fine, to repent; which is either adequately the same thing with faith, or included therein, according to the apostolical meaning of the word; for that remission of sins, which is sometime made the consequent of faith, is otherwhere expressly annexed to repentance: the sum of the gospel our Saviour himself expresses by the preaching in his name 'repentance, and remission of sins in all nations:' and, 'Repent,' St. Peter preached, 'and let every one of you be baptised:' and, 'Repent,' said he again, 'and return, that your sins may be blotted out:' and, 'Then to the Gentiles,' say those in the Acts, 'hath God given repentance unto life:' which signifies the same with that other expression concerning the same persons, 'God's having purified their hearts by faith;' in which places I take repentance to import the

same thing with faith; being in effect nothing else but sincere embracing Christian religion. Now the word faith is thus extended (beyond its natural and primary force) to comprehend such a compliance of will, or purpose of obedience, because this doth naturally arise from a persuasion concerning the truth of the gospel, if it be real and strong enough in that degree, which Christianity requires, and supposes to the effects mentioned in the gospel; if it be ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ, 'in the heart,' (or a hearty faith,) as St. Paul speaks; if it be such as Philip exacts of the Eunuch, 'a belief ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας, from the whole heart;' if it have that due plerophory, that stability, that solidity, which the Apostles speak of; for a weak, faint, slight, ill-grounded, ill-rooted opinion concerning the truth of the gospel, (such as those in another case had, whom our Saviour rebuked with a τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι; 'Why are ye fearful, O ye small in faith?' such as St. Peter had, when our Saviour said to him, ὀλιγόπιστε, εἰς τί ἐδίστασας; 'O thou of small faith, why didst thou doubt?' which faith could not keep them nor him from sinking; not such as those had, who 'heard the word, and gladly received it; but wanted root, so that, when persecution or affliction did arise for the word, they were presently scandalised;' not such a faith as those many rulers had, who are said to have 'believed in Jesus, but for fear of the Pharisees did not confess him;' not such as Simon Magus had, who is said to have believed Philip, but to no good effect, 'because his heart was not right before God;' he having not thoroughly resolved to obey the gospel; not such as Agrippa had, whom St. Paul had 'almost persuaded to be a Christian') —these sorts of faith are, in comparison to that we speak of, but equivocally so called: it includes a firm resolution to perform carefully all the duties enjoined to Christians, to undergo patiently all the crosses incident to Christianity; it is the same with becoming a disciple of Christ, which a man cannot be without renouncing all other interests and concernments, without denying one's self, forsaking all and following him; without taking his yoke on him, going after, and bearing his cross: it supposes (as our Saviour also teaches us) that a man hath cast up with himself the gain and loss he is like to receive by the bargain, and being satisfied therein, to contract

bona fide with God; that a man hath weighed all the pains and dangers he shall be put on by entering into this warfare, and so resolvedly to adventure on it; it is productive of love to the truth, yea of love to God, and charity to men, without which all faith is unprofitable and ineffectual, as St. Paul teaches us. In short, this faith is nothing else but a true, serious, resolute embracing Christianity; not only being persuaded that all the doctrines of Christ are true, but submitting to his will and command in all things.

But to prevent mistakes, and remove objections, I shall yet farther observe,

6. That this faith hath, although not an adequate, yet a peculiar respect unto that part of Christian truth, which concerns the merciful intentions of God toward mankind, and the gracious performances of our Saviour in order to the accomplishing them; the promises of pardon to our sins, and restoral into God's favor on the terms propounded in the gospel, of sincere faith and repentance; whence the gospel is called λόγος καταλλαγῆς, ('the word of reconciliation;') and this is expressed as a summary of the apostolic ministry or message; that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world, not imputing their sins:' and this our Saviour did order in especial manner to be preached in his name; this accordingly they did mainly propound and inculcate; that God had exalted 'Jesus to his right hand as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins; that he should receive remission of sins, whoever did believe in his name:' 'Let it be known unto you, brethren, that by this man remission of sins is denounced unto you;' (so did they preach.) Whence this faith is (*signanter*) called 'belief in the blood of Christ:' indeed, of all Christian doctrines, this is most proper first to be propounded and persuaded, as the most attractive to the belief of the rest; most encouraging and comfortable to men; most apt to procure glory to God by the illustration of his principal attributes, his justice and his goodness; most suitable to the state of things between God and man; for men being in a state of rebellion and enmity toward God, in order to their reducement and recovery thence, it was most proper that in the first place an overture of mercy and pardon should be made, an act of ob-

livion should be passed and propounded to them: yet are not these propositions and promises the adequate or intire object of this faith; for other articles of faith are often propounded in a collateral order with those; yea sometimes (as in the case of the Eunuch) others are expressed, when that is not mentioned, but only understood: neither if any one should believe all the doctrines of that kind, if he did not withal believe that Jesus is his Lord, and shall be his Judge; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, and a judgment to come, with the like fundamental verities of our religion, would he be a believer in this sense.

7. I observe farther, that this faith doth relate only to propositions revealed by God, (or at least deduced from principles of reason, such as are, that there is a God; that God is good, veracious, and faithful; that our religion is true in the gross; that the holy Scriptures were written by divine inspiration; which propositions we believe on rational grounds and motives,) not unto other propositions concerning particular matter of fact, subject to private conscience or experience; nor to any conclusions depending on such propositions. For instance, it is a part of this faith to believe that God is merciful and gracious, that he bears good-will unto, and is disposed to pardon, every penitent sinner; or (which is all one) that supposing a man doth believe, and hath repented, God doth actually love him, and doth forgive his sins; this is, I say, indeed a part of the faith we speak of, its object being part of the gospel revealed unto us: but the being persuaded that God doth love me, or hath pardoned my sins, or that I am in a state of favor with God, may, as my circumstances may be, not be my duty; however it is no part of this faith, but a matter of opinion, dependent on private experience: for such a persuasion must be grounded on my being conscious to myself of having truly and thoroughly repented, (this being required by God, as a necessary condition toward my obtaining pardon and his favor;) of having performed which duty I may presume, when it is false, (and therefore cannot then be obliged to believe it,) and may doubt, when it is true: and that not without good reason, considering the blindness and fallibility of man's mind, and that man's 'heart is deceitful above all things,' as the prophet tells

us: on which account then a man may not be obliged to have such a persuasion. It is indeed a great fault to doubt, or distrust, on that hand which concerns God; about his goodness, his truth, his wisdom, or power: but it is not always (perhaps not commonly) blameable to question a man's own qualifications, or his own performances, whether in kind or degree they be answerable to what God requires; that is inconsistent with true faith, but this not: we cannot have any good religious affections toward God, if we do not take him to be our gracious Father; but we may have in us such affections toward him, and he may be favorably disposed toward us, when we suspect ourselves to be untoward children, 'unworthy (as the prodigal son in the gospel confessed himself) to be called the sons of God.' The centurion in the gospel did confess himself 'unworthy that Christ should enter under his roof:' but he declared his persuasion that 'if Christ should only speak a word, his child should be healed;' and our Saviour thereon professes, 'that he had not found so much faith in Israel.' To the blind men imploring his relief, our Saviour puts the question, 'Do ye believe that I can do this? They answered, Yes, Lord:' he required no more of them; but said thereon, 'According to your faith let it be done unto you.' And that for which Abraham the father of believers, his faith is represented so acceptable is, his firm persuasion concerning God's power; 'because,' saith St. Paul, 'he had a plerophory, that what was promised, God was able to perform;' by doing thus, he was a believer, and thereby 'gave glory to God,' as the Apostle there adds. If we do not then distrust God, we may have faith, although we distrust ourselves. It is true (generally and absolutely speaking) we should endeavor so fully and clearly to repent, and to perform whatever God requires of us, that we may thence acquire a good hope concerning our state; we should labor that our hearts may not condemn us of any presumptuous transgressing our duty, and consequently, that we may become in a manner confident of God's favor toward us: but when we have done the best we can, even when we are not conscious of any enormous fault or defect, yet we may consider with St. Paul, 'that we are not thereby justified,' but abide liable to the more certain cognisance and judgment of God, 'who seeth not as man seeth;'

that we are not capable, or competent judges of ourselves; nor are ever the better for thinking well of ourselves; since, as St. Paul tells us again, 'he is not approved that commends himself, but whom the Lord commendeth:' for that, *delicta sua quis intelligit?* 'who can thoroughly understand and scan his own errors?' 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am purged of my sin?' Who can know, (if the psalmist implieth that he could not,) until God hath searched him and discovers it, 'whether there be any secret way of wickedness in him;' whether he be sufficiently grieved for having offended God, fully humbled under the sense of his sins, thoroughly resolved to amend his life? However, it often happens that true faith and sincere repentance are in degree very defective; in which case we may, without prejudicing the truth of our faith, suspect the worst; yea, I conceive it is more safe and commendable so to do: if in any, then chiefly, I suppose, in this most important and critical affair, the wise man's sentence doth hold, 'Blessed is he that feareth always;' so feareth as thereby to become more solicitous and watchful over his heart and ways; more careful and studious of securing his salvation finally, to render his calling and election in the event more firm, and in his apprehension more hopeful. I dare say, of two persons otherwise alike qualified, he that on this ground (fearing his own unworthiness, or the defect of his performances) is most doubtful of his state, doth stand really on better terms with God; as the pharisee, who justified himself, and took himself to be in a very good condition, was indeed less justified (somewhat the less for that conceit of his) than the poor publican, who was sensible of his own unworthiness, and condemned himself in his own opinion: the great danger lies on that hand of being presumptuous, arrogant, and self-conceited, which God hates; and on this hand there usually lies humility, modesty, and poverty of spirit, which God loves. As 'every high thing (every elevation of mind) is abominable in God's sight,' and he 'depresseth him that exalteth himself;' so lowly thoughts are gracious in God's regard: 'he raiseth him that humbleth himself, and is lowly in his own eyes:' he hath an especial respect to him 'that is of a poor and contrite heart, and trembleth at his word.' It is a property of good men,

(being such as often reflect on their own hearts and ways, and thence discern the defects in them,) with Jacob, to think themselves 'less than the least of God's mercies:' with David, to be 'afraid of God's judgments:' it is their duty to pass the time of 'their sojourning here in fear,' 'to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.' I may add, that sometime a person much loving God, and much beloved of him, may be like 'a pelican of the wilderness, and an owl of the desert;' from an apprehension of God's anger, may have 'no soundness in his flesh, nor rest in his bones, by reason of his sin;' may have his 'spirit overwhelmed, and his heart within him desolate;' may fear that his sins have 'separated between him and his God;' and that he is 'forsaken of God; God hiding his face, and withdrawing the light of his countenance,' he may be troubled, may have 'his soul cast down, and disquieted within him;' may be ready to say, 'I am cut off from before thine eyes:' even such a man, in such a state of distress and doubt, may continue a believer; he retaining honorable thoughts of God, (in which the worth and virtue of true faith consisteth,) although dejected by the conscience of his own infirmities, by suspicion of his own indispositions, and consequently by the fear of God's displeasure.

Farther, that this faith doth not essentially include a respect to such particular propositions, or does not (as many in these two latter ages have deemed and taught) consist in our being persuaded that our sins are pardoned, or our persons just in God's esteem; that we are acceptable to God, and stand possessed of his favor, it appears from hence, that faith is in holy Scripture represented in nature precedaneous to God's benevolence, (especial I mean, not general benevolence, for that prevents all acts and dispositions of us, or in us,) to his conferring remission of sins, accepting and justifying our persons; it is a previous condition, without which (as the Apostle teaches us) 'it is impossible to please God;' it is a reason of God's love, ('The Father,' saith our Lord, 'loves you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came from God;') it is a ground of Divine acceptation and good-will, ('Abraham believed God,' saith St. James, 'and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God;') it is a

mean, or instrument, (so it is constantly represented,) by which we are justified, obtain God's favor, and the remission of our sins; and therefore is in order of nature previous and prerequisite thereto; it is therefore required before baptism, in which remission of sins is consigned: God justifies, accepts, and pardons him, that hath been impious, but not him that is an infidel. This is the method plainly declared in Scripture; wherefore if faith implies a persuasion that God hath remitted our sins, it must imply an antecedent faith, (even a justifying faith, antecedent to itself,) or that we believe before we believe, and are justified before we are justified. I add, that by this notion many, or most (I will not, after the council of Trent, say all) humble and modest Christians are excluded from being believers; even all those who are not confident of their own sincerity and sanctity, and consequently cannot be assured of their standing in God's favor: and on the other side, the most presumptuous and fanatical sort of people are most certainly the truest and strongest believers, as most partaking of the most essential property thereof, according to that notion; for of all men living, such are wont to be most assured of God's especial love unto them, and confident that their sins are pardoned: experience sufficiently shows this to be true, and consequently that such a notion of faith cannot be good.

Much less is that notion of faith right, which defines faith to be a firm and certain knowlege of God's eternal good-will toward us particularly, and that we shall be saved;* which notion (taught in the beginning of the Reformation, by a man of greatest name and authority) was thus lately expressed by the professors of Leyden in their *Synopsis purioris Theologiæ*: 'Faith (they say in their definition thereof) is a firm assent—by which every believer, with a certain trust resting in God, is persuaded not only that remission of sins is in general promised to them who believe, but is granted to himself particularly, and eternal righteousness, and from it life, by the mercy of God,' &c. Which notion seems to be very uncomfortable, as rejecting every man from the company of believers, who is either ignorant or doubtful, not only concerning his present, but his final state;

* Calv. Inst. lib. vii. §. 7. et 28. compar.

who hath not, not only a good opinion, but a certain knowlege of his present sincerity and sanctity; yea, not only of this, but of his future constant perseverance therein: so that if a man be not sure he hath repented, he is (according to this notion) sure that he hath not repented, and is no believer. How many good people must this doctrine discourage and perplex! To remove it, we may consider, 1. that it altogether inverts and confounds the order of things declared in Scripture, wherein faith (as we observed before) is set before obtaining God's good-will, as a prerequisite condition thereto; and is made a means of salvation, ('without faith it is impossible to please God:' 'By grace we are saved, through faith.') And if we must believe before God loves us, (with such a love as we speak of,) and before we can be saved; then must we know that we believe, before we can know that God loves us, or that we shall be saved; and consequently we must indeed believe before we can know that God loves us, or that we shall be saved. But this doctrine makes the knowlege of God's love and of salvation in nature antecedent to faith, as being an essential ingredient into it; which is preposterous. Consider this circle of discourse: a man cannot know that he believes, without he does believe; this is certain: a man cannot know that he shall be saved, without knowing he doth believe; this is also certain: for on what ground, from what evidence can he know his salvation, but by knowing his faith? But again backward: a man, say they, cannot believe (and consequently not know that he believes) without being assured of his salvation. What an inextricable maze and confusion is here! This doctrine indeed doth make the knowlege of a future event to be the cause of its being future; it supposes God to become our friend (as Abraham was by his faith) by our knowing that he is our friend; it makes us to obtain a reward by knowing that we shall obtain it; it supposes the assurance of our coming to a journey's end, to be the way of getting thither; which who can conceive intelligible or true? Our Saviour doth indeed tell us that it is the way to life everlasting (or conducible to the attaining it) to know (that is, to believe, as it is interpreted in the 8th verse of that chapter; for what on good grounds we are persuaded of, or judge true, we may be said to know) 'the true God, and

Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent:' but he doth not say, it is life everlasting (or conducible to the obtaining it) to know that we shall have life everlasting; that were somewhat strange to say. St. Peter exhorts us to 'use diligence to make our calling and election sure,' (or firm and stable;) but he doth not bid us know it to be sure. If we did know it to be so, what need should we have to make it so? yea, how could we make it so? He doth not enjoin us to be sure of it in our opinion, but to secure it in the event by sincere obedience and a holy life; by so impressing this persuasion on our minds, so rooting the love of God and his truth in our hearts, that no temptation may be able to subvert our faith, or to pluck out our charity.

2. This notion plainly supposes the truth of that doctrine, that no man being once in God's favor can ever quite lose it; the truth of which I shall not contest now, (nor allege the many clear passages of Scripture, nor the whole tenor of the gospel, nor the unanimous consent of all Christendom for fifteen hundred years against it,) but shall only take notice, that their notion of faith necessarily presupposing the truth of this doctrine, is yet thereby everted: for it follows thence, that no man, who doth not assent to that doctrine, is or can be a believer; for he that is not assured of the truth of that opinion (although we suppose him assured of his present sincerity, and being in a state of grace) cannot know that he shall be saved: so that only such as agree with them in that opinion can be believers, which is somewhat hard, or rather very absurd. And to aggravate this inconvenience, I adjoin, 3. that, according to their notion, scarce any man, (except some have had an especial revelation concerning their salvation,) before the late alterations in Christendom, was a believer; for before that time it hardly appears that any man did believe, as they do, that a man cannot fall from grace; and therefore scarce any man could be assured that he should be saved; and therefore scarce any man could be a believer in their sense.

St. Augustine* himself (whose supposed patronage stands them in so much stead on other occasions) hath often affirmed that divers have had given them that faith, that charity, that

* De Corr. et Gr. cap. 9. et 13. De bon. Persev. cap. viii. 13.

justification, wherein if they had died, they should have been saved; who yet were not saved: which persons surely, when they were in that good state, (admitting them, according to St. Augustine's supposal, to have been in it,) were as capable of knowing their salvation as any other man can be; yea, St. Augustine himself (considering that *accidere cuiquam quod potest, cuivis potest*, what was another man's case might be his, there being no ground of difference) could not be more sure of his own salvation at any time than such persons were at that time: according to St. Augustine's judgment therefore, no man could know that he should be saved, (his salvation depending on perseverance, which in his opinion not being given to all, must as to our knowlege, whatever it might be in respect to God's decree, be contingent and uncertain)—it follows, I say, on his suppositions, yea he expressly affirms it; lib. ii. de bono Pers. *Itaque*, says he, *utrum quisque hoc (perseverantiæ) munus acceperit, quamdiu hanc vitam ducit, incertum est:* 'whether any have received this gift of perseverance while he leads this life, is uncertain.' Wherefore St. Augustine* could not be assured of his own salvation; and therefore (according to these men's sense) he was no believer, no Christian; which I suppose yet they will not assert, though it be so plainly consequent on their own position. I might, 4. ask of them, if a man should confess ingenuously, that although he did hope for mercy from God in that day, yet that he was not assured of his salvation, whether such a person should be rejected from Christian communion, as no believer. It seems, according to their notion of faith, he should; since by his own (in this particular infallible) judgment, it is notorious that he, as being no believer, hath no title unto, or interest in, the privileges of Christianity: but this proceeding would very much depopulate the Church, and banish from it, I fear, the best (the most humble and modest, yea the wisest and soberest) members thereof.

But so much I think suffices for the removal of that new harsh notion, to say no worse of it.

† There is another more new than that, devised by some,

* Aug. Ep. 121. ad Probam. † Vid. Ames. Med. lib. i. cap. 27.

(who perceived the inconveniences of the former notions, yet, it seems, did affect to substitute some new fine one in their room,) which if it be not so plainly false, yet is, it seems, more obscure and intricate: it is this; that faith is not an assent to propositions of any kind, but a recumbency, leaning, resting, rolling on, adherency to (for they express themselves in these several terms, and others like them) the person of Christ; or an apprehending and applying to ourselves the righteousness of Christ; his person itself, and his righteousness, as simple incomplex things; not any proposition (that they expressly caution against) are the objects, say they, of our faith: they compare our faith to a hand that lays hold on Christ, and applies his righteousness; and to an eye that looks on him, and makes him present to us; and by looking on him (as on the brazen serpent) cures us. But this notion is so intricate, these phrases are so unintelligible, that I scarce believe the devisers of them did themselves know what they meant by them; I do not, I am sure: for what it is for one body to lean on, or to be rolled on another; what for one body to reach at, and lay hold on another; what it is to apply a garment to one's body, or a salve to one's wounds, I can easily understand: but what it is for a man's mind to lean on a person, (otherwise than by assenting unto some proposition he speaks, or relying on some promise he makes,) to apply a thing, otherwise than by consenting to some proposition concerning that thing, I cannot apprehend or reach; there is not, as we noted before, any faculty or operation of a man's mind, which answers the intent of such notions or phrases. Let me put this case: suppose a great province had generally revolted from its sovereign, whereby the people thereof had all deserved extreme punishment suitable to such an offence; but that the king, moved with pity, and on the intercession of his only beloved son, (together with a satisfaction offered and performed by him,) should resolve to grant a general pardon to them, on just and fit, and withal very easy terms; and that, for the execution of this gracious purpose toward them, he should depute and send his son himself among them to treat with them, by him declaring his merciful intentions toward them, with the conditions, on compliance wherewith, all, or any of them, should be par-

doned their offence, and received into favor; those conditions being, suppose it, that first they should receive and acknowlege his son for such as he professed himself to be, (the king's son indeed, who truly brought such a message unto them from his majesty;) then that they should seriously resolve with themselves, and solemnly engage to return unto their due allegiance; undertaking faithfully for ever after to observe those laws, which the said prince in his father's name should propound unto them. Suppose farther, that the prince in pursuance of this commission and design, being come into the country, should there send all about officers of his, enjoining them to discover the intent of his coming, what he offered, and on what terms; withal, empowering them in his name to receive those who complied into favor, declaring them pardoned of all their offences, and restored to the benefit of the king's protection, and all the privileges of loyal subjects: suppose now that these officers should go to the people, and speak to them in this manner: The king makes an overture of pardon and favor unto you, on condition that any one of you will recumb, rest, lean on, or roll himself on the person of his son, (rest on his person, not only rely on his word, that you are to understand,) or in case you will lay hold on and apply to yourselves his son's righteousness, by which he hath procured of the king his father this mercy and favor for you, (not only being persuaded that he hath performed thus much for you, this is not enough;) do you think these messengers should thus well express themselves, or perform their message handsomely and with advantage? Should not they do much better, laying aside such words of metaphor and mystery, to speak in plain language; telling them that their king's son (by plain characters discernible to be truly such) was come among them on such an intention; that if they would acknowlege him, and undertake thereafter to obey him, they should receive a full pardon, with divers other great favors and advantages thereby? The case is apparently so like to that which stands between God and man, and doth so fully resemble the nature of the evangelical dispensation, that I need not make any application, or use any more argument to refute that notion: I shall only say, that I conceive these new phrases, for such they are, not known to ancient Christians,

nor delivered either in terms or sense in Scripture; for the places alleged in favor or proof of them by Ames, one of the first broachers of them, (all, we may presume, that they could find anywise seeming to favor their notion,) do not, as, if time would permit, might easily be showed, import any such thing; but are strangely misapplied—that, I say, these phrases do much obscure the nature of this great duty, and make the state of things in the gospel more difficult and dark than it truly is; and thereby seem to be of bad consequence, being apt to beget in people both dangerous presumptions and sad perplexities: for they hearing that they are only or mainly bound to have such a recumbency on Christ, or to make such an application of his righteousness, they begin (accordingly as they take themselves to be directed) to work their minds to it; and when they have hit on that posture of fancy, which they guess to suit their teachers' meaning, then they become satisfied, and conceit they believe well, although perhaps they be ignorant of the principles of the Christian faith, and indisposed to obey the precepts of our Lord. Sometimes, on the other side, although they well understand, and are persuaded concerning the truth of all necessary Christian doctrines, and are well disposed to observe God's commandments, yet because they cannot tell whether they apprehend Christ's person dexterously, or apply to themselves his righteousness in the right manner, as is prescribed to them, (of which it is no wonder that they should doubt, since it is so hard to know what the doing so means,) they become disturbed and perplexed in their minds; questioning whether they do believe or no. Thus by these notions (or phrases rather) are some men tempted fondly to presume, and other good people are wofully discouraged by them; both being thence diverted, or withdrawn from their duty: whereas what it is to believe, as Christians anciently did understand it, and as we have assayed to explain it, is very easy to conceive; and the taking it so, can have no other than very good influence on practice, as both reason (as we have insinuated) shows, and the Scripture largely and plainly affirms. But let thus much suffice for the inquiry concerning the genuine nature and notion of faith proper to this place, (that faith by which in this

text we are said to be justified:) the other particulars I cannot so much as touch on at this time.

I end with those good prayers of our church:

'O Lord, from whom all good things do come, grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good; and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Amen.

'Almighty and everlasting Lord, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON V.

ROMANS, CHAP. V.—VERSE 1.

THE next thing to be considered is; what justification imports? a term which has been in latter times canvassed with much vehemence of discussion.

In former times there does not appear to have been any difference or debate about it: reasons for this given. The disputes on this point arose about the time of the Reformation.

With a hope of reconciling such disputants, it is proposed to consider the several divine acts to which the term justification is, according to any pretended sense, applicable. According to the tenor of Christian doctrine, these are as follow:

1. God (through the obedience and intercession of his beloved Son) is so reconciled to mankind, that unto every person who sincerely believes the gospel, repents, and amends his life, he doth on the solemn profession of that resolution in baptism, remit all past offences, accepting his person, and receiving him into favor, &c.

2. As any person persisting steadily in that sincere faith, assuredly continues in a state of grace; so when such a one, out of human frailty, falls into the commission of sin, God, through regard to his Son, doth, on the confession and repentance of such a person, remit his sins and restore him to favor; according to the Evangelist, 1 John i. 9.

3. To each person sincerely embracing the gospel, and continuing steadfast therein, God doth afford his Holy Spirit, as a principle producing inward sanctity or virtuous dispositions, and

enabling him to discharge all the conditions of faith and obedience required of him, &c.

Now all these acts are generally acknowleged and ascribed unto God; but with which of them the act of justification is solely or chiefly coincident, &c. is a question coming under debate. To clear up this, some observations are propounded.

I. We need not search into the primitive sense of the word, since in common use it often declines from that: mere grammar will not here help us.

II. The sense is not to be searched for in extraneous writers; both because no such subject ever came under their consideration, and because they seldom or never use the word in a sense at all congruous with it.

III. In the sacred writings at large, it is commonly applied to persons, according to various senses, some wide and general, others more restrained and particular: these stated.

IV. The word seems somewhat peculiar to St. Paul, and is hardly by the other Apostles applied to that matter which he expresses by it: the right sense of it therefore seems best derivable from considering the nature of his subject, the drift of his discourse and reasoning, and the other equivalent phrases which he uses.

V. With this method of inquiry it may be observed that the notion of the word which is evidently the most usual in Scripture, is best suited to the meaning of St. Paul here, and commonly elsewhere; namely, that God's justifying solely, or chiefly, doth import his acquitting us from guilt, condemnation, and punishment, by free pardon, &c. accounting us, and dealing with us, as righteous, &c.

1. This sense best agrees with the nature of the subject-matter, and the design of St. Paul's discourse; viz., the asserting the necessity, sufficiency, and excellency of the Christian dispensation, in bringing men to happiness, and consequently the

rendering men acceptable to God, who is the sole author and giver of happiness: this enlarged on.

2. Again, the manner of prosecuting his discourse, and the arguments by which he infers his conclusions concerning the gospel, confirm this notion: this fully shown.

3. Farther, the same notion may be confirmed by comparing this term with other terms and phrases equivalent, or opposite to this of justification: examples quoted.

4. Moreover this notion may be strengthened by excluding that sense, which in opposition thereto is assigned, according to which justification is said to import, not only remission of sin, and acceptance with God, but the making a man intrinsically righteous, by infusing into him, as it is said, a habit of grace or charity.

Admitting this to be true, as in some sense it is, yet that sort of righteousness does not seem implied by the word justification, according to St. Paul's intent, in those places where he discourses about justification by faith; such a sense not consisting well with the drift of his reasoning, nor with divers passages in his discourse: this fully shown in *eight* instances.

VI. So much may suffice for a general explication of the notion: but for a more full clearing of the point it may be requisite to resolve a question concerning the time when this act is performed or dispensed. It may be inquired when God justifieth; whether once, or at several times, or continually. To which it may be answered briefly,

I. That the justification spoken of by St. Paul seems, in his meaning, only or especially to be that act of grace which is dispensed to persons at their baptism, or entrance into the church, when they openly profess their faith, and undertake the practice of Christian duty: *five* reasons given for this opinion.

II. The virtue and effect of that first justifying act continues (that is, we abide in a justified state) so long as we per-

form the conditions imposed by God, and undertaken by us at our first justification: this enlarged on.

III. Although justification chiefly signifies the first act of grace towards a Christian at his baptism, yet (according to analogy) every dispensation of pardon granted on repentance, may be styled justification: this topic enlarged on.

According to each of these notions, all good Christians may be said to have been justified. Conclusion.

I Believe, &c.

SERMON V.

OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS, CHAP. V.—VERSE 1.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to the understanding of these words, I did formerly propound divers particulars to be considered and discussed: the first was, what that faith is by which Christians are said to be justified? This I have dispatched: the next, what justification doth import? The which I shall now endeavor to explain; and I am concerned to perform it with the more care and diligence, because the right notion of this term hath in latter times been canvassed with so much vehemence of dissension and strife.

In former times, among the fathers and the schoolmen, there doth not appear to have been any difference or debate about it; because, as it seems, men commonly having the same apprehensions about the matters, to which the word is applicable, did not so much examine or regard the strict propriety of expression concerning them: consenting in things, they did not fall to cavil and contend about the exact meaning of words. They did indeed consider distinctly no such point of doctrine as that of justification, looking on that word as used incidentally in some places of Scripture, for expression of points more

clearly expressed in other terms; wherefore they do not make much of the word, as some divines now do.

But in the beginning of the Reformation, when the discovery of some great errors (from the corruption and ignorance of former times) crept into vogue, rendered all things the subjects of contention, and multiplied controversies, there did arise hot disputes about this point; and the right stating thereof seemed a matter of great importance; nor scarce was any controversy prosecuted with greater zeal and earnestness: whereas yet (so far as I can discern) about the real points of doctrine, whereto this word, according to any sense pretended, may relate, there hardly doth appear any material difference; and all the questions depending, chiefly seem to consist about the manner of expressing things, which all agree in; or about the extent of the signification of words capable of larger or stricter acception: whence the debates about this point, among all sober and intelligent persons, might, as I conceive, easily be resolved or appeased, if men had a mind to agree, and did not love to wrangle; if at least a consent in believing the same things, although under some difference of expression, would content them, so as to forbear strife.

To make good which observation, tending as well to the illustration of the whole matter, as to the stating and decision of the controversies about it, let us consider the several divine acts to which the term justification is, according to any sense pretended, applicable: I say divine acts; for that the justification we treat of is an act of God simple or compound (in some manner) respecting, or terminated on man, is evident, and will not, I suppose, be contested; the words of St. Paul in several places so clearly declaring it; as in that, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth;' and in that, 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' Now according to the tenor of Christian doctrine such acts are these.

1. God (in regard to the obedience performed to his will by his beloved Son, and to his intercession) is so reconciled to mankind, that unto every person who doth sincerely believe the gospel, and repenting of his former bad life, doth seriously

resolve thereafter to live according to it, he doth (on the solemn obsignation of that faith, and profession of that resolution in baptism) intirely remit all past offences, accepting his person, receiving him into favor; assuming him into the state of a loyal subject, a faithful servant, a dutiful son; and bestowing on him all the benefits and privileges suitable to such a state; according to those passages: 'It behoved Christ to suffer—and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations:' 'Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;' and, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins;' and, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their sins;' and in other places innumerable.

2. As any person persisting in that sincere faith, and serious purpose of obedience, doth assuredly continue in that state of grace, and exemption from the guilt of sin; so in case that, out of human frailty, such a person doth fall into the commission of sin, God (in regard to the same performances and intercessions of his Son) doth, on the confession and repentance of such a person, remit his sin, and retain him in or restore him to favor; according to those sayings of St. John, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:' and, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

3. To each person sincerely embracing the gospel, and continuing in steadfast adherence thereto, God doth afford his Holy Spirit, as a principle productive of all inward sanctity and virtuous dispositions in his heart, enabling also and quickening him to discharge the conditions of faith and obedience required from him, and undertaken by him; that which is by some termed making a person just, infusion into his soul of righteousness, of grace, of virtuous habits; in the Scripture style it is called acting by the Spirit, bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost, renovation of the Holy Ghost, creation to good works, sanctification by the Spirit, &c., which phrases

denote partly the collation of a principle enabling to perform good works, partly the design of religion tending to that performance.

Now all these acts (as by the general consent of Christians, and according to the sense of the ancient Catholic church, so) by all considerable parties seeming to dissent, and so earnestly disputing about the point of justification, are acknowleged and ascribed unto God; but with which of them the act of justification is solely or chiefly coincident; whether it signifieth barely some one of them, or extendeth to more of them, or comprehendeth them all, (according to the constant meaning of the word in Scripture,) are questions coming under debate, and so eagerly prosecuted: of which questions whatever the true resolution be, it cannot methinks be of so great consequence as to cause any great anger or animosity in dissenters one toward another, seeing they all conspire in avowing the acts, whatever they be, meant by the word justification, although in other terms; seeing all the dispute is about the precise and adequate notion of the word justification: whence those questions might well be waived as unnecessary grounds of contention; and it might suffice to understand the points of doctrine which it relateth to in other terms, laying that aside as ambiguous and litigious. Yet because the understanding the rightest, or most probable notion of the word, may somewhat conduce to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and to clearing the matters couched in it, somewhat also to the satisfaction of persons considerate and peaceable, I shall employ some care faithfully (without partiality to any side) to search it out and declare it: in order whereto I shall propound some observations, seeming material.

I. Whereas it were not hard to speak much, and criticise about the primitive sense of the word, and about its various acceptions both in holy Scripture and other writings, I do question whether doing that would be pertinent or conducible to our purpose of understanding its right notion here: for knowing the primitive sense of words can seldom or never determine their meaning any where, they often in common use declining from it; and the knowing variety of acceptions doth

at most yield only the advantage of choosing one suitable to the subjacent matter and occasion. We are not therefore to learn the sense of this word from mere grammarians.

II. The sense of this word is not to be searched in extraneous writers; both because no matter like to that we treat on did ever come into their use or consideration, and because they do seldom or never use the word in a sense anywise congruous to this matter: in them most commonly the word δικαιόω doth signify (as the like word ἀξιόω) to deem a thing just, equal, or fit, (or simply to deem about a thing.) Sometimes also, yet not often as I take it, being applied to an action, or cause, it importeth to make it appear lawful, or just, as when we ordinarily say, to justify what one saith or doth, (whence δικαίωμα in Aristotle is an argument proving the justice of a cause, *firmamentum causæ*;) but in them very seldom or never it is applied to persons; and an example, I conceive, can hardly be produced, wherein it is so used.

III. In the sacred Writings at large it is commonly applied to persons, and that according to various senses, some more wide and general, some more restrained and particular. It there sometime denoteth generally to exercise any judicial act on, in regard unto, or in behalf of a person; to do him right, or justice, in declaring the merit of his cause, or pronouncing sentence about him; in acquitting or condemning him for any cause, in obliging him to, or exempting him from any burden, in dispensing to him any reward or punishment, indifferently: thus Absalom said, 'O that I were made a judge in the land, that every man, which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me, וְאֶצְדְּקֵהוּ καὶ δικαιώσω αὐτὸν, and I would justify him,' that is, I would do him right: and in the 82nd Psalm, this charge is given to the princes, or judges; 'Defend the poor and fatherless, דַּלוְיָתוֹם δικαιώσατε, justify the poor and needy;' that is, do right and justice to them.

But more particularly the word signifieth (and that according to the most usual and current acception) so to do a man right, as to pronounce sentence in his favor, as to acquit him from guilt, to excuse him from burden, to free him from punishment; whence we most often meet with the word placed in direct opposition to that of condemnation: as in that law, 'If

there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked:' and in Solomon's prayer, 'Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way on his head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness:' and in the Proverbs, 'He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even both are an abomination unto the Lord;' and in the gospel our Saviour saith, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'

In consequence on this sense, and with a little deflection from it, to justify a person sometime denoteth to approve him, or esteem him just, a mental judgment, as it were, being passed on him: so wisdom is said to be justified, that is, approved, by her children: so in the gospel some persons are said to justify themselves, that is, to conceit themselves righteous: and the 'Publican went home justified rather than the Pharisee,' that is, more approved and accepted by God: so also it is said, that 'all the people and the publicans justified God, being baptised with John's baptism:' they justified God, that is, they declared their approbation of God's proceeding, in the mission of John.

In like manner, justification is taken for exemption from burdens; as where in the Acts St. Paul saith, 'And from all things, from which by the law of Moses ye could not be justified, in this is every one that believeth justified.'

It may also sometimes be taken for deliverance from punishment; as where in the law God saith, 'The innocent and righteous slay thou not; for I will not justify the wicked;' that is, not let him escape with impunity; according to that in the Proverbs, 'Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.'

IV. We may observe that (as every man hath some phrases and particular forms of speech, in which he delighteth, so) this term is somewhat peculiar to St. Paul, and hardly by the other Apostles applied to that matter, which he expresseth thereby: they usually in their sermons and epistles do speak the same thing, whatever it be, in other terms more immediately ex-

pressive of the matter. St. James indeed doth use it, but not so much, it seemeth, according to his usual manner of speech, as occasionally, to refute the false and pestilent conceits of some persons, who mistaking St. Paul's expressions and doctrine, did pervert them to the maintenance of Solifidian, Eunomian, and Antinomian positions, greatly prejudicial to good practice. And seeing the term is so proper to St. Paul in relation to this matter, the right sense and notion thereof seemeth best derivable from considering the nature of the subject he treateth on, observing the drift of his discourse and manner of his reasoning, comparing the other phrases he useth equivalent to this, and interpretative of his meaning.

V. Following this method of inquiry, I do observe and affirm that the last notion of the word, as it is evidently most usual in the Scripture, so it best suiteth to the meaning of St. Paul here, and otherwhere commonly, where he treateth on the same matters; that God's justifying solely, or chiefly, doth import his acquitting us from guilt, condemnation, and punishment, by free pardon and remission of our sins, accounting us and dealing with us as just persons, upright and innocent in his sight and esteem: the truth of which notion I shall by divers arguments and considerations make good.

1. This sense doth best agree to the nature of the subject matter, and to the design of St. Paul's discourse; which I take to be this; the asserting the necessity, reasonableness, sufficiency, and excellency of the Christian dispensation; in order to that, which is the end of all religion, the bringing men to happiness, and consequently to the rendering men acceptable to God Almighty, who is the sole Author and Donor of happiness: this is that, which in general he aimeth to assert and maintain.

This, I say, is that which he chiefly driveth at, to maintain, that it is not unreasonable that God should so proceed with men (whose good and felicity, as their gracious Maker, he greatly tendereth) as the Christian gospel declareth him to do, but that rather such proceeding was necessary and fit, in order to our salvation; and withal conformable to the ordinary method of God's proceedings toward the same purpose.

Now God's proceeding with man according to the gospel,

the general tenor thereof doth set out to be this; that God out of his infinite goodness and mercy, in consideration of what his beloved Son, our blessed Lord, hath performed and suffered, in obedience to his will, and for the redemption of mankind, (which by transgression of his laws, and defailance in duty toward him, had grievously offended him and fallen from his favor, was involved in guilt, and stood obnoxious to punishment,) is become reconciled to them, (passing by and fully pardoning all offences by them committed against him,) so as generally to proffer mercy, on certain reasonable and gentle terms, to all that shall sincerely embrace such overtures of mercy, and heartily resolve to comply with those terms required by him: namely, the returning and adhering to him, forsaking all impiety and iniquity, constantly persisting in faithful obedience to his holy commandments; this, I say, is the proceeding of God, which the Christian gospel doth especially hold forth, and which, according to our Lord's commission and command, the Apostles did first preach to men; as whosoever will consider the drift and tenor of their preaching, will easily discern; which therefore St. Paul may reasonably be supposed here to assert and vindicate against the Jews, and other adversaries of the gospel: consequently the terms he useth should be so interpreted as to express that matter; whence being justified will imply that which a person embracing the gospel doth immediately receive from God, in that way of grace and mercy, viz. an absolution from his former crimes, an acquittance from his debts, a state of innocence and guiltlessness in God's sight, an exemption from vengeance and punishment; all that which by him sometimes, and by the other Apostles, is couched under the phrases of 'remission of sins,' having sins 'blotted out and washed away,' being 'cleansed from sin;' and the like: thus considering the nature of the matter, and design of his discourse, would incline us to understand this word.

2. Again, the manner of his prosecuting his discourse, and the arguments by which he inferreth his conclusions concerning the gospel, do confirm this notion. He discourseth, and proveth at large, that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, were 'shut up under sin,' that 'all had sinned, and did fall short of the glory of God,' (that is, of rendering him his due glory by dutiful

obedience,) that 'every mouth was stopped,' having nothing to say in defence of their transgressions, and 'that all the world stood obnoxious to the severity of God's judgments;' that not only the light of nature was insufficient to preserve men from offending inexcusably, even according to the verdict of their own consciences, but that the written law of God had (to manifold experience) proved ineffectual to that purpose, serving rather 'to work wrath,' to bring men under a curse, to aggravate their guilt, to convince them of their sinfulness, to discourage and perplex them; on which general state of men (so implicated in guilt, so liable to wrath) is consequent a necessity either of condemnation and punishment, or of mercy and pardon.

He doth also imply (that which in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he prosecuteth the same argument, is more expressly delivered) that no precedent dispensation had exhibited any manifest overture, or promise of pardon; for the light of nature doth only direct unto duty, condemning every man in his own judgment and conscience who transgresseth it; but as to pardon in case of transgression, it is blind and silent; and the law of Moses rigorously exacteth punctual obedience, denouncing in express terms a condemnation and curse to the transgressors thereof in any part; from whence he collecteth that 'no man can be justified by the works of the law,' (natural or Mosaical; or that no precedent dispensation can justify any man,) and that 'a man is justified by faith,' or hath absolute need of such a justification as that which the gospel declareth and tendereth: λογιζόμεθα οὖν, 'we hence,' saith he, 'collect,' or argue, 'that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law:' which justification must therefore import the receiving that free pardon, which the criminal and guilty world did stand in need of, which the forlorn and deplorable state of mankind did groan for, without which no man could have any comfort in his mind, any hope, or any capacity of salvation. If the state of man was a state of rebellion, and consequently of heinous guilt, of having forfeited God's favor, of obnoxiousness to God's wrath; then that justification which was needful, was a dispensation of mercy, remitting that guilt, and removing those penalties.

Again, St. Paul commendeth the excellency of the evangelical dispensation from hence, that it intirely doth ascribe the justification of men to God's mercy and favor, excluding any merit of man, any right or title thereto, grounded on what man hath performed; consequently advancing the glory of God, and depressing the vanity of man; 'If,' saith he, 'Abraham were justified by works, he had whereof to boast; for that to him who worketh, wages are not reckoned as bestowed in favor, but are paid as debt:' so it would be if men were justified by works; they might claim to themselves the due consequences thereof, impunity and reward; they would be apt to please themselves, and boast of the effects arising from their own performances: but if, as the gospel teacheth, 'men are justified freely (gratis) by God's mercy and grace,' without any regard to what they formerly have done, either good or bad, those who have lived wickedly and impiously (on their compliance with the terms proposed to them) being no less capable thereof than the most righteous and pious persons: then 'where is boasting? It is excluded;' then surely no man can assume any thing to himself, then all the glory and praise are due to God's frank goodness; the purport of which reasoning (so often used) doth imply that a man's justification signifieth his being accepted or approved as just, standing *rectus in curia;* being in God's esteem, and by his sentence, absolved from guilt and punishment; the which cannot otherwise be obtained than from divine favor declared and exhibited in the gospel; according as St. Paul otherwhere fully speaketh: 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace.'

Again, St. Paul expresseth justification as an act of judgment performed by God, whereby he declareth his own righteousness or justice; that justice consisting in acceptance of a competent satisfaction offered to him in amends for the debt due to him, and in reparation of the injury done unto him, in consequence thereof acquitting the debtor, and remitting the offence; so those words declare: 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his

blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Justification there we see is expressed a result of Christ's redemption, and the act of God consequent thereon; so is remission of sins; God by them jointly demonstrating his justice and goodness, so that they may be well conceived the same thing diversely expressed, or having several names according to some divers formalities of respect. So in other places, sometimes justification, sometimes remission of sins are reckoned the proper and immediate effects of our Saviour's passion; 'Being (saith St. Paul in the 5th to the Romans) justified by his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath:' and, 'In whom (saith he again in the first of the Epistle to the Ephesians) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;' which argueth the equivalency of these terms.

So likewise a main point of the evangelical covenant on God's part is made justifying of a man by his faith, or on it: and remission of sins on the same condition is also made the like principal point, which sometime is put alone, as implying all the benefits of that covenant.

Again, justification is by St. Paul made the immediate consequent, or special adjunct, of baptism; therein, he saith, we 'die to sin,' (by resolution and engagement, to lead a new life in obedience to God's commandment,) and so dying we are said to be justified from sin, (that which otherwise is expressed or expounded, by being freed from sin:) now the freedom from sin obtained in baptism is frequently declared to be the remission of sin then conferred, and solemnly confirmed by a visible seal.

Whereas also so frequently we are said to be 'justified by faith,' and according to the general tenor of Scripture, the immediate consequent of faith is baptism; therefore dispensing the benefits consigned in baptism, is coincident with justification; and that dispensation is frequently signified to be the cleansing us from sin by intire remission thereof.

3. Farther, the same notion may be confirmed by comparing

this term with other terms and phrases equivalent or opposite to this of justification.

One equivalent phrase is imputation of righteousness; 'As,' saith St. Paul, 'David speaketh of that man's blessedness, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin:' whence to him that considers the drift and force of St. Paul's discourse, it will clearly appear that justification, imputing righteousness, not imputing sin, and remission of sin, are the same thing: otherwise the Apostle's discourse would not signify or conclude any thing.

For confirmation of his discourse (arguing free justification by God's mercy, not for our works) St. Paul also doth allege that place in the psalm, 'For in thy sight shall no man living be justified;' the sense of which place is evidently this, that no man living, his actions being strictly tried and weighed, shall appear guiltless, or deserve to be acquitted; but shall stand in need of mercy, or can no otherwise be justified than by a special act of grace.

Again, imputing faith for righteousness is the same with justifying by faith, ('Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness:') but that imputation is plainly nothing else but the approving him, and taking him for a righteous person in regard to his faith.

Again, justification is the same with being righteous before God, as appeareth by those words: 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified:' but being just before God, plainly signifieth nothing else but being accepted by God, or approved to his esteem and judgment.

Being reconciled to God seemeth also to be the same with being justified by him; as appeareth by those words, 'Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life:' where πολλῷ μᾶλλον δικαιωθέντες, and πολλῷ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες, seem to

signify the same; but that reconciliation is interpreted by remission of sins: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.'

To obtain mercy is another term signifying justification; and what doth that import but having the remission of sins in mercy bestowed on us?

Again, justification is opposed directly to condemnation: 'As,' saith he, 'by the offence of one man (judgment came) on all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one man (the free gift came) on all men to justification of life; ('justification of life,' that is, a justification so relating to life,' or bestowing a promise thereof, as the condemnation opposite thereto respected death, which it threatened.) In which place St. Paul comparing the first Adam with his actions, and their consequences, to the second Adam with his performances, and what resulted from them, teacheth us, that as the transgression of the first did involve mankind in guilt, and brought consequently on men a general sentence of death, (forasmuch as all men did follow him in commission of sin;) so the obedience of the second did absolve all men from guilt, and restored them consequently into a state of immortality, (all men, under the condition prescribed, who, as it is said, should 'receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness' tendered to them;) the justification therefore he speaketh of doth so import an absolution from guilt and punishment, as the condemnation signifieth a being declared guilty, and adjudged to punishment.

Bellarmine* indeed (who, in answering to this place objected against his doctrine, blunders extremely, and is put to his trumps of sophistry) telleth us that in this place, to maintain the parallel or antithesis between Adam and Christ, justification must signify infusion of grace, or putting into a man's soul an inherent righteousness; because Adam's sin did constitute us unjust with an inherent unrighteousness: but (with his favor) justification and condemnation being both of them the acts of God, and it being plain that God condemning doth not infuse any inherent unrighteousness into man, neither doth he justifying, formally (if the antithesis must be pat) put any inherent righte-

* De Justif. ii. 3. i. 1.

ousness into him; inherent unrighteousness in the former case may be a consequent of that condemnation, and inherent righteousness may be connected with this justification; but neither that nor this may formally signify those qualities respectively: as the inherent unrighteousness consequent on Adam's sin is not included in God's condemning, so neither is the inherent righteousness proceeding from our Saviour's obedience contained in God's justifying men.

But however most plainly (and beyond all evasions) justification and condemnation are opposed otherwhere in this Epistle: 'Who,' saith St. Paul, 'shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' (or criminate against them.) 'It is God who justifieth; who is he that condemneth?' What can be more clear, than that there justification signifieth absolution from all guilt and blame?

4. Farther, this notion may be confirmed by excluding that sense, which in opposition thereto is assigned, according to which justification is said to import, not only remission of sin, and acceptance with God, but the making a man intrinsically righteous, by infusing into him, as they speak,* a habit of grace, or charity; the putting into a man a 'righteousness, by which (as the council of Trent expresseth it) we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only reputed, but are called, and become truly righteous, receiving righteousness in ourselves.'

Now admitting this to be true, as in a sense it surely is, that whoever (according to St. Paul's meaning in this Epistle) is justified, is also really at the same endued with some measure of that intrinsic righteousness which those men speak of, (forasmuch as that faith, which is required to justification, (being a gift of God, managed by his providence, and wrought by his preventing grace,) doth include a sincere and steadfast purpose of forsaking all impiety, of amendment of life, of obedience to God, which purpose 'cleanseth the heart,' and is apt to produce as well inward righteousness of heart, as outward righteousness of practice; for that also to every sound believer on his faith is bestowed the Spirit of God, as a principle of righteousness, dwelling in him, directing, admonishing, exciting him

* Bell. i. 3.

to do well; assisting and enabling him sufficiently to the performance of those conditions, or those duties, which Christianity requireth, and the believer thereof undertaketh; which, the man's honest and diligent endeavor concurring, will surely beget the practice of all righteousness, and in continuance of such practice will render it habitual;)—avowing, I say, willingly, that such a righteousness doth ever accompany the justification St. Paul speaketh of, yet that sort of righteousness doth not seem implied by the word justification, according to St. Paul's intent, in those places where he discourseth about justification by faith; for that such a sense of the word doth not well consist with the drift and efficacy of his reasoning, nor with divers passages in his discourse. For,

1. Whereas St. Paul, from the general depravation of manners in all men, both Jews and Gentiles, argueth the necessity of such a justification, as the Christian gospel declareth and exhibiteth, if we should take justification for infusing an inherent quality of righteousness into men, by the like discourse we might infer the imperfection and insufficiency of Christianity itself, and consequently the necessity of another dispensation beside it; for that even all Christians, as St. James saith, do offend often, and commission of sin doth also much reign among them; so that St. Paul's discourse (justification being taken in this sense) might strongly be retorted against himself.

2. Supposing that sense of justification, a Jew might easily invalidate St. Paul's ratiocination, by saying, that even their religion did plainly enough declare such a justification, which God did bestow on all good men in their way, as by their frequent acknowlegements and devotions is apparent; such as those of the psalmist: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me.' 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.' 'Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; incline my heart unto thy testimonies.' Which sort of prayers God hearing did infuse righteousness, and justified those persons in this sense; so that Christianity herein could not challenge any thing peculiar, or could on this score appear so necessary as St. Paul pretendeth.

3. From the justification St. Paul speaketh of, all respect

to any works, and to any qualifications in men, (such as might beget in them any confidence in themselves, or yield occasion of boasting,) is excluded; it cannot therefore well be understood for a constituting man intrinsically righteous, or infusing worthy qualities into him; but rather for an act of God terminated on a man as altogether unworthy of God's love, as impious as an enemy, as a pure object of mercy; so it is most natural to understand those expressions, importing the same thing; 'God justifieth the ungodly;' 'we being sinners, Christ died for us;' (purchasing, as the following words imply, justification for us;) 'being yet enemies, we by his death were reconciled,' or justified, for recouciliation and justification, as we before noted, do there signify the same.

4. Abraham is brought in as an instance of a person justified in the same manner as Christians are according to the gospel: but his justification was merely the approving and esteeming him righteous, in regard (not to any other good works, but) to his steadfast faith, and strong persuasion concerning the power and faithfulness of God—because 'he was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform;' to which faith and justification consequent thereon, St. Paul, comparing those of Christians, subjoineth; 'Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' As then it were an idle thing to fancy a righteousness on the score of that belief, dropt into Abraham; and as his being justified is expressly called, having righteousness, on the account of his faith, imputed or ascribed to him; so our justification (like and answerable to his) should correspondently be understood, the approving and accounting us, notwithstanding our former transgressions, as righteous persons, in regard to that honest and steadfast faith wherein we resemble 'that father of the faithful.'

Even St. James himself, when he saith that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works, it is evident that he meaneth not that they had certain righteous qualities infused into them, or were made thence by God intrinsically more righteous than they were before, but that they were approved and accepted by

God, because of the good works they performed, (in faith and obedience to God,) one of them offering to sacrifice his son, the other preserving the spies sent from God's people.

5. The so often using the word imputation of righteousness, instead of justification, doth imply this act not to be a transient operation on the soul of man, but an act immanent to God's mind, respecting man only as its object, and translating him into another relative state: with this sense that word excellently well agreeth, otherwise it were obscure, and so apt to perplex the matter, that probably St. Paul would not have used it.

6. Again, when it is said again and again, 'that faith is imputed for righteousness;' it is plain enough that no other thing in man was required thereto: to say that he is thereby sanctified, or hath gracious habits infused, is uncouth and arbitrarious: the obvious meaning is, that therefore he is graciously accepted and approved, as we said before.

7. We might in fine add, that the word justification is very seldom or never used in that sense of making persons righteous, or infusing righteousness into them. Bellarmine and Grotius, having searched with all possible diligence, do allege three or four places wherein (with some plausible appearance) they pretend it must be so understood: but as they are so few, so are they not any of them thoroughly clear and certain; but are capable to be otherwise interpreted without much straining; the clearest place, Dan. xii. 3. the LXX. read מצדיקים ἀπὸ δικαίων, which the Hebrew and sense will bear. Wherefore the other sense, which we have maintained, being undeniably common and current in the Scripture, and having so many particular reasons showing it agreeable to St. Paul's intent, seemeth rather to be embraced.

In St. Paul's Epistles I can only find three or four places, wherein the word justifying may with any fair probability be so extended as to signify an internal operation of God on the soul of men; they are these:

'And such were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of Christ Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' where justification being performed by the Spirit of God, seemeth to

fieth, whether once, or at several times, or continually. To which question I answer briefly:

1. That the justification which St. Paul discourseth of, seemeth in his meaning, only or especially to be that act of grace, which is dispensed to persons at their baptism, or at their entrance into the Church; when they openly professing their faith, and undertaking the practice of Christian duty, God most solemnly and formally doth absolve them from all guilt, and accepteth them into a state of favor with him: that St. Paul only or chiefly respecteth this act, considering his design, I am inclined to think, and many passages in his discourse seem to imply.

If his design were (as I conceive it probable) to vindicate the proceeding of God, peculiarly declared in the gospel, in receiving the most notorious and heinous transgressors to grace in baptism, then especially must the justification he speaketh of relate to that; to confirm which supposition, we may consider, that,

1. In several places justification is coupled with baptismal regeneration and absolution: 'Such were some of you; but ye have been washed, ye have been sanctified, ye have been justified in the name of Christ Jesus:' (where, by the way, being sanctified and being justified seem equivalent terms; as in that place where Christ is said 'to have given himself for the church, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word,' sanctification, I conceive, importeth the same thing with justification.) Again, 'He saved us by the laver of regeneration, that having been justified by his grace, we may be made heirs of everlasting life.'

2. St. Paul in expressing this act, as it respecteth the faithful, commonly doth use a tense referring to the past time: he saith not δικαιούμενοι, 'being justified,' but δικαιωθέντες, 'having been justified;' not δικαιοῦσθε, 'ye are justified;' but δικαιώθητε, 'ye have been justified;' namely, at some remarkable time, that is, at their entrance into Christianity. (Our translators do render it according to the present time; but it should be rendered as I say, in our text, and in other places.)

3. St. Paul in the 6th to the Romans discourseth thus: Seeing we in baptism are cleansed and disentangled from sin,

are 'dead to it, and so justified from it,' God forbid that we should return to live in the practice thereof, so abusing and evacuating the grace we have received; which discourse seemeth plainly to signify, that he treateth about the justification conferred in baptism.

4. He expresseth the justification he speaketh of by the words πάρεσις τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων, 'the passing over foregoing sins,' which seemeth to respect that universal absolution, which is exhibited in baptism. 'Being,' saith he, 'justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.'

5. The relation this justification hath to faith, being dispensed in regard thereto, (or on condition thereof,) doth infer the same: faith is nothing else but a hearty embracing Christianity, which first exerteth itself by open declaration and avowal in baptism, (when we 'believe with our hearts to righteousness, and confess with our mouth to salvation;') to that time therefore the act of justification may be supposed especially to appertain: then, when the evangelical covenant is solemnly ratified, the grace thereof especially is conferred. On such considerations I conceive that St. Paul's justification chiefly doth respect that act of grace, which God consigneth to us at our baptism. But farther,

2. The virtue and effect of that first gratifying act doth continue (we abide in a justified state) so long as we do perform the conditions imposed by God, and undertaken by us at our first justification; 'holding fast the profession of our hope without wavering; keeping faith, and a good conscience;' so long as we do not forfeit the benefit of that grace by 'making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,' relapsing into infidelity, or profaneness of life. Our case is plainly like to that of a subject, who having rebelled against his prince, and thence incurred his displeasure, but having afterward on his submission, by the clemency of his prince, obtained an act of pardon, restoring him to favor and enjoyment of the protection and privileges suitable to a loyal subject, doth continue in this state, until by forsaking his allegiance, and running

again into rebellion, he so loseth the benefit of that pardon, that his offence is aggravated thereby: so if we do persevere firm in faith and obedience, we shall (according to the purport of the evangelical covenant) continue in a state of grace and favor with God, and in effect remain justified; otherwise the virtue of our justification ceaseth, and we in regard thereto are more deeply involved in guilt.

3. Although justification chiefly signifieth the first act of grace toward a Christian at his baptism, yet (according to analogy of reason, and affinity in the nature of things) every dispensation of pardon granted on repentance may be styled justification; for as particular acts of repentance, on the commission of any particular sins, do not so much differ in nature, as in measure or degree, from that general conversion practised in embracing the gospel; so the grace vouchsafed on these penitential acts, is only in largeness of extent, and solemnity of administration, diversified from that; especially considering that repentance after baptism is but a reviving of that first great resolution and engagement we made in baptism; that remission of sin on it is only the renovation of the grace then exhibited; that the whole transaction in this case is but a reinstating the covenant then made (and afterward by transgression infringed) on the same terms, which were then agreed on; that consequently, by congruous analogy, this remission of sins, and restoring to favor, granted to a penitent, are only the former justification reinforced; whence they may bear its name: but whether St. Paul ever meaneth the word to signify thus, I cannot affirm.

Now according to each of these notions all good Christians may be said to have been justified; they have been justified by a general abolition of their sins, and reception into God's favor in baptism; they so far have enjoyed the virtue of that gracious dispensation, and continued in a justified state, as they have persisted in faith and obedience; they have, on falling into sin, and rising thence by repentance, been justified by particular remissions. So that 'having been justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

SUMMARY OF SERMON VI.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. LI.—VERSE 15.

AN attentive observation of this world, or visible frame, is not only a worthy employment of our thoughts, but even a considerable duty: for it is what affords most cogent and satisfactory arguments for that foundation of all religion, the being of one God, incomprehensibly excellent in all perfections: it also serves to beget in our minds suitable affections towards him, &c. General view of those footsteps or signs which discover the work of one wise, powerful, and good Being.

I. Things viewed singly, which are most familiar and obvious to our senses: first, for example, those plants which we every day see, smell, and taste; the construction and propagation, &c. of these specified. Inquiry whence all this fitness of things can arise: whether from chance or casual motions of matter? Answered: that it is repugnant to the name and nature of chance, that any thing regular or constant should arise from it: this enlarged on. Whether from necessity? In this case the phrase only is altered; for necessary causality, taken without relation to some wisdom or counsel that established it, is but another name for chance: this topic dilated on. These effects therefore must proceed from wisdom, such as surpasses our comprehension, joined to power equally great, &c.

And if we have reason to acknowlege so much wisdom and power discovered in one plant, and multiplied in so many thousands of different kinds, how much more may we discern them in any one animal; in all of them? The animal structure, &c. enlarged on. And can this proceed from mere chance or

blind necessity? Could ever senseless matter-jumble itself into such wonderful postures, so that of innumerable myriads of atoms none should in roving miss their way? none fail to seat themselves in the order of exactest art? This subject dilated on.

II. But if, passing from particulars, we observe the relation of several kinds of things each to other, we shall find more reason to be convinced concerning the same excellent perfections farther extending themselves. Is there not, for example, a palpable relation between the frame, the temper, the natural inclinations, or instincts of each animal, and its element or natural place of abode, wherein it only can live, finding therein its food, its harbour, its refuge? Is not to each faculty within an object without prepared, exactly correspondent thereto? which were it wanting, the faculty would become vain and useless, yea, sometimes hurtful, &c. This topic dilated on, with the various products of nature, formed for the purpose of ministering to our preservation, ease, and delight, &c. And must we bless fortune for all this? did she so especially love us, and tender our good? does she so crown us with lovingkindness, and daily load us with benefits? Shall we, in her favor, disclaim so noble a parent, as omnipotence in wisdom and in goodness? This topic enlarged on.

III. The last consideration intimated was, that all these things join together in one universal consort, with one harmonious voice, to proclaim one and the same Wisdom, as having designed; one and the same Power, as having produced; one and the same Goodness, as having set both wisdom and power to work in designing and producing their being, in preserving and governing it. For this whole system of things, what is it but one goodly body, as it were, compacted of several members and organs, so aptly, that each confers its being and its operation to the ornament and stability of the whole? *All the parts of the world*, said a philosopher, *are so constituted, that they could not be either better for use, or more beautiful for show.*

This topic dilated on. *If then*, as Plutarch observes, *no fair thing is ever produced by hazard, but with art framing it;* how could this most fair comprehension of all fair things be, not the lawful issue of art, but a by-blow of fortune; of fortune, the mother only of broods monstrous and misshapen? If the nature of any cause be discoverable by its effects; if from any work we may infer the workman's ability; if in any case the results of wisdom are distinguishable from the consequences of chance; we have reason to believe that the Architect of this magnificent frame was one incomprehensibly wise, powerful, and good Being. Conclusion.

I Believe in God,

SERMON VI.

THE BEING OF GOD PROVED FROM THE FRAME OF THE WORLD.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. LI.—VERSE 15.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

THE attentive observation of this world, or visible frame, is not only in itself a most worthy employment of our thoughts, (much more noble than any of those petty cares, which commonly possess or distract our minds,) but, if either the example of the best men, or the great usefulness thereof, to the best purposes, can oblige us, even a considerable duty not to be neglected by us. For it is that which affords most cogent and satisfactory arguments to convince us of, and to confirm us in, the belief of that truth which is the foundation of all religion and piety, the being of one God, incomprehensibly excellent in all perfections, the maker and upholder of all things; it instructs us not only that God is, but more distinctly shows what he is; declaring his chief and peculiar attributes of wisdom, goodness, and power superlative; it also serves to beget in our minds affections toward God, suitable to those notions; a reverent adoration of his unsearchable wisdom; an awful dread of his powerful majesty; a grateful love of his gracious benignity and goodness: to these uses we find it applied by the best men, not

only by the wisest philosophers among heathens, but by the holy prophets of God; who frequently harp on this string, and make sweetest melody thereon; exciting both in themselves and others, pious thoughts and holy devotions therewith; strengthening their faith in God; advancing their reverence toward him; quickening and inflaming their love of him; magnifying his glory and praise thereby; by the consideration, I say, of those wonderful effects discernible in nature, or appearing to us in this visible world. And if ever to imitate them herein were necessary, it seems to be so now, when a pretence to natural knowlege, and acquaintance with these things, hath been so much abused to the promoting of atheism and irreligion; when that instrument which was chiefly designed, and is of itself most apt, to bring all reasonable creatures to the knowlege, and to the veneration of their Maker, hath (in a method most preposterous and unnatural) been perverted to contrary ends and effects. To the preventing and removing which abuse, as every man should contribute what he can, so let me be allowed to endeavor somewhat toward it, by representing briefly what my meditation did suggest, serving to declare that (as the prophet asserts, or implies in the words I read) even in this visible world there are manifest tokens, or footsteps, by which we may discover it to be the work, or product, of one Being, incomprehensibly wise, powerful, and good; to whom, consequently, we must owe the highest respect and love, all possible worship and service. Of these footsteps, or signs, there be innumerably many, which, singly taken, do discover such perfections to be concerned in the production of them; the relation of several to each other do more strongly and plainly confirm the same; the connection and correspondence of all together doth still add force and evidence thereto, each attesting to the existence of those perfections, all conspiring to declare them concentred and united in one Cause and Being.

I. View we first, singly, those things, which are most familiar and obvious to our senses, (for only some such I mean to consider, such as any man awake, and in his senses, without any study or skill more than ordinary, without being a deep philosopher or a curious virtuoso, may with an easy attention observe and discern;) view we such objects, I say; for instance,

first, those plants we every day do see, smell, and taste: Have not that number, that figure, that order, that temperament, that whole contexture and contemperation of parts we discern in them, a manifest relation to those operations they perform? Were not such organs so fashioned, and so situated, and so tempered, and in all respects so fitted, some of them in order to the successive propagation of them, (that they might in kind never fail or perish, but in that respect become as it were immortal;) some in regard to their present nutrition and maintenance, (that the individuals themselves might not, before their due period of subsistence run through, be spent, or destroyed;) some for shelter and defence against all sort of causes prejudicial to either of those continuances in being respectively; to omit those, which serve for grace and ornament? (Do not, I say, the seed most evidently respect the propagation of the kind; the root the drawing of nourishment, the nervous filaments the conveyance of that; the skin or bark, the keeping all together close and safe; the husks and shells, preservation of the seed; the leaves, defence of the fruit?) That such a constitution of parts is admirably fit for such purposes, we cannot be so stupid as not to perceive; we cannot but observe it necessary, for that by detraction, or altering any of them, we obstruct those effects. Whence then, I inquire, could that fitness proceed? from chance, or casual motions of matter? But is it not repugnant to the name and nature of chance, that any thing regular or constant should arise from it? that by it causes vastly many in number and different in quality, (such as are the ingredients into the frame of the least organ in a plant,) should not once, not sometimes, not often only, but always, in one continual unaltered method concur to the same end and effect, (to the same useful end, to the same handsome effect?) Are not confusion, disparity, deformity, unaccountable change and variety, the proper issues of chance?* It is Aristotle's discourse: 'That one or two things,' saith he, 'should happen to be in the same manner, is not unreasonable to suppose; but that all things should conspire by chance, it looks like a fiction to conceive: what is universal and perpetual cannot result from

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. 2. Arist. Pol. vii. 4.

chance.' 'We can only,' saith he again, 'with good reason assert, or suppose such causes of things, as we see generally or frequently to occur.'* Now did we ever observe (or ever any man through the whole course of times) any new thing like or comparable to any of these, to spring up casually? Do we not with admiration regard (as a thing very rare and unaccountable) in other pieces of matter any gross resemblance to these, that seemeth to arise from contingent motions and occurrences of bodies? If chance hath formerly produced such things, how comes it, that it doth not sometime now produce the like; whence becomes it for so many ages altogether impotent and idle? Is it not the same kind of cause? hath it not the same instruments to work with, and the same materials to work on? The truth is, as it doth not now, so it did not, it could not ever produce such effects; such effects are plainly improper and incongruous to such a cause: chance never writ a legible book; chance never built a fair house; chance never drew a neat picture; it never did any of these things, nor ever will; nor can be without absurdity supposed able to do them; which yet are works very gross and rude, very easy and feasible, as it were, in comparison to the production of a flower or a tree. It is not therefore reasonable to ascribe those things to chance: to what then? will you say, to necessity? If you do, you do only alter the phrase; for necessary causality (as applicable to this case, and taken without relation to some wisdom or counsel that established it) is but another name for chance; they both are but several terms denoting blindness and unadvisedness in action; both must imply a fortuitous determination of causes, acting without design or rule. A fortuitous determination, I say; for motions of matter, not guided by art or counsel, must be in their rise fortuitous, (insomuch as that according to the nature of the thing there is no repugnance, and we may easily conceive it possible that the matter might have been moved otherwise; there being therein no principle originally determining it to this more than to that sort of motion;) and the same motions in their process must be determinate, because in their subject there is no principle, whereby it can alter its course.

* Arist. de Cœlo, ii. 8.

The same effect therefore of this kind, if necessary, is casual as to its original, and in that respect may be said to come from chance; if casual, is necessary in the progress, and may thence be said to proceed from necessity. And although we should suppose the beginning of these causes in their action, or motion, to be eternal, it were all one; for whether now, or yesterday, or from eternity, infers no difference (except the entangling our minds, and incumbering the case with impertinent circumstances) as to our purpose; not the circumstance of the time, but the quality of the cause being only here considerable; the same causes (abstracting from all counsel ordering them) being alike apt or inept yesterday as to-day, always as sometimes, from all eternity as at any set time, to produce such effects. Neither can we therefore reasonably attribute the effects we speak of to necessity; except only to such an hypothetical necessity, as implies a determination from causes acting by will and understanding; of such a necessity matter is very susceptive; being perfectly obedient to art directing it with competent force; as on the other hand we find it by reason and experience altogether unapt, without such direction, of itself (that is, either necessarily or contingently) to come into any regular form, or to pursue any constant course; it being, as we see, shattered into particles innumerable, different in size, shape, and motion, according to all variety more than imaginable; thence only fit in their proceedings to cross and confound each other: the determination therefore of such causes as these to such ends and effects, can be only the result of wisdom, art, and counsel; which alone (accompanied with sufficient power) can digest things, void of understanding, into handsome order, can direct them unto fit uses, can preserve them in a constant tenor of action; these effects must therefore, I say, proceed from wisdom, and that no mean one, but such as greatly surpasses our comprehension, joined with a power equally great: for to digest bodies so very many, so very fine and subtile, so divers in motion and tendency, that they shall never hinder or disturb one another, but always conspire to the same design, is a performance exceedingly beyond our capacity to reach how it could be contrived or accomplished; all the endeavors of our deepest skill and most laborious industry cannot arrive to the producing

of any work not extremely inferior to any of these, not in comparison very simple and base; neither can our wits serve to devise, nor our sense to direct, nor our hand to execute any work, in any degree like to those. So that it was but faintly, though truly, said of him in Cicero, concerning things of this kind; 'Nature's powerful sagacity no skill, no hand, no artist can follow by imitation.'

And if we have reason to acknowlege so much wisdom and power discovered in one plant, and the same consequently multiplied in so many thousands of divers kinds; how much more may we discern them in any one animal, in all of them? the parts of whom in unconceivable variety, in delicate minuteness, in exquisiteness of shape, position, and temper, do indeed so far exceed the other, as they appear designed to functions far more various and more noble; the enumeration of a few whereof, obvious to our sense, in some one living creature, together with conjectures about their manner of operation and their use, how much industry of man hath it employed; how many volumes hath it filled, and how many more may it do, without detecting a ten thousandth part of what is there most obvious and easy; without piercing near the depth of that wisdom, which formed so curious a piece? So much however is palpably manifest, that each of these so many organs was designed, and fitted on purpose to that chief use, or operation, we see it to perform; this, of them to continue the kind; that, to preserve the *individuum*; this, to discern what is necessary, convenient, or pleasant to the creature, or what is dangerous, offensive, or destructive thereto; that, to pursue or embrace, to decline or shun it; this, to enjoy what is procured of good; that, to remove what is hurtful or useless, or to guard from mischief and injury; that each one is furnished with such apt instruments, suitable to its particular needs, appetites, capacities, stations, is most apparent; and I must therefore here ask again, (and that with more advantage,) whence this could proceed; whence all these parts came to be fashioned and suited; all of them so necessary, or so convenient, that none without the imperfection and the prejudice of the creature, some not without its destruction, can be wanting? who shaped and tempered those hidden subtile springs of life, sense, imagination, memory, passion; who im-

pressed on them a motion so regular and so durable, which through so many years, among so many adverse contingencies assailing it, is yet so steadily maintained? Can this however proceed from giddy chance, or blind necessity? could ever (of old or lately, it is all one) senseless matter jumble itself so fortunately into so wonderful postures, so that of those innumerable myriads of atoms, or small insensible bodies, (which compose each of these curious engines) none should in its roving miss the way; none fail to stop and seat itself in that due place where exactest art would have disposed it? Could so many, so dim, so narrow marks be hit without the aim of a most piercing and unerring eye; without the guidance of a most steady and immovable hand? All that grace and beauty, which so delights our sense beholding it; all that correspondence and symmetry, which so satisfies our mind considering it; all that virtue and energy, extending to performances so great and admirable, must they be ascribed to causes of no worth, and supposed done to no purpose? that eye which reaches the very stars, and in a moment renders all the world, as it were, present to the creature that useth it; that ear which perceives the least stirring of the air about it, and so subtly distinguishes the smallest differences in its motion; that tongue which so readily is composed to imitate so many petty diversities of tune: those other organs which are affected by the least breath or vapor, by the least tang or savor, so that it by them can both perceive the presence, and distinguish the quality of whatever is near, that it may not be disappointed in missing what is beneficial, nor be surprised by the assault of what is noxious thereto; all these and many more, the defect, distemper, or dislocation of which would be disgraceful, incommodious, or destructive to the creature; all these, I say, can any man, indued with common sense, or ordinary ingenuity, affirm to have proceeded from any other cause than from a wisdom and power incomprehensible? May not the most excellent pieces of human artifice, the fairest structures, the finest portraitures, the most ingenious and useful inquiries, such as we are wont most to admire and commend, with infinitely more ease, happen to exist without any contrivance or industry spent on them? If we cannot allow those rude imitations of nature to spring up of

themselves, but as soon as we espy them are ready to acknowlege them products of excellent art, though we know not the artist, nor did see him work; how much more reason is there that we should believe those works of nature, so incomparably more accurate, to proceed also from art, although invisible to us, and performing its workmanship by a secret hand? I can assure you of those who have with greatest attention contemplated these things, and who pass for men most able to judge in the case, (even those who have discovered least affection to religion, or indeed are more than suspected of an aversion from it; whose words therefore may be taken at least for impartial dictates of common sense,) that even from such the irresistible force and evidence of the thing hath extorted clear and ample confessions to this purpose: that in nature nothing is performed without reason or design; but every thing in the best manner and to the best end, beyond what is done in any art, is frequently asserted and assumed by Aristotle himself as a most evident truth: that in contriving the frame of our bodies, (and the same holdeth concerning the bodies of other animals,) a wisdom inscrutable; in accomplishing it, a power insuperable; in designing to them so much of decency and convenience, a benignity worthy of all veneration are demonstrated, Galen in several places, with language very full and express, yea very earnest and pathetical, doth acknowlege. That who doth attently regard a locust, or a caterpillar, or any other viler animal, shall every where therein discover a wonderful art and diligence, is an aphorism dropt even from the gloomy pen of Cardan.* That if any man shall view thoroughly all the instruments both of generation and nutrition, and doth not perceive them to have been made and ordered to their respective offices by some mind, (or intelligent agent,) he is to be reputed himself void of mind, (or out of his wits,) is the expression of another person well known among us, whom few do judge partial to this side, or suspicious of bearing a favorable prejudice to religion. Thus doth common sense from these sort of beings, whereof there be innumerable exposed daily to our observation, even singly considered, deduce the existence of a

* Card. de Variet. vii. 27. pag. 283. Hobbes. de Hom. cap. 1.

wisdom, power, and goodness unconceivably great; and there are probably divers others (stones, metals, minerals, &c.) no less obvious, even here on the earth, our place of dwelling, which, were our senses able to discern their constitution and texture, would afford matter of the same acknowlegement.

II. But if, passing from such particulars, we observe the relation of several kinds of things each to other, we shall find more reason to be convinced concerning the same excellent perfections farther extending themselves. By such comparison we may easily discern, that what speaks much of art in itself singly considered, declares more thereof in respect to other things; and that many things, in which, separately looked on, we could perceive but small artifice, have indeed much of it in such relation, (which although seeming in themselves mean and despicable, are yet very useful and necessary to considerable purposes, in subserviency to the convenience of more noble beings;) and though perhaps we cannot thoroughly penetrate the relative use and design of every thing which hangs up before us in Nature's shop, (by reason of our incapacity, or unskilfulness in her trade,) yet we shall have reason from what we can plainly discover, to collect that each piece there is a tool accommodate to some use. Is there not, for instance, a palpable relation between the frame, the temper, the natural inclinations or instincts of each animal, and its element or natural place and abode; wherein it can only live, finding therein its food, its harbor, its refuge? Is not to each faculty within (or to each sensitive organ) an object without prepared, exactly correspondent thereto; which were it wanting, the faculty would become vain and useless, yea sometime harmful and destructive; as reciprocally the object would import little or nothing, if such a faculty were not provided and suited thereto? As for example, what would an eye (or the visive power) signify, if there were not light prepared to render things visible thereto? and how much less considerable than it is would the goodly light itself be, were all things in nature blind, and uncapable to discern thereby? What would the ear serve for, if the air were not suitably disposed (made neither too thick nor too thin; neither too resty nor too fleeting, but) in a due consistency, and

capable of moderate undulations distinguishable thereby? The like we might with the same reason inquire concerning the other senses and faculties, vital or animal, and their respective objects, which we may observe with admirable congruity respecting each other. Have not all those goodly colors, and comely shapes, which in the leaves, the flowers, and the fruits of plants (I might add in gems and precious stones; yea in all sorts of living creatures) we behold, an evident respect to the sight, and the sight a no less visible reference to them? Those many kinds of pleasant fragrancy in herbs, flowers, and spices, have they not a like manifest relation to smell, and it to them? Could all that great variety of wholesome, savory, and delicious fruits, herbs, grains, pulses, seeds, and roots become so constantly produced, otherwise than for the purpose of feeding and sustaining living creatures with pleasure and content? Is there not a notorious correspondence between them and the organs of taste, digestion, and nutrition? Are there not appetites prompting, yea with intolerable pain provoking each living creature to seek its proper sustenance? and doth it not find in the enjoyment hereof a pleasure and satisfaction unexpressible? Let me add: whence comes it to pass, that ordinarily in nature nothing occurs noisome or troublesome to any sense; but all things wholesome and comfortable, at least innocent or innoffensive? that we may wander all about without being urged to shut our eyes, to stop our ears, our mouths, our noses; but rather invited to open all the avenues of our soul, for the admission of the kind entertainments nature sets before us? Doth she not every where present spectacles of delight (somewhat of lively picture, somewhat of gay embroidery, somewhat of elegant symmetry) to our eyes, however seldom any thing appears horrid or ugly to them? Where is it that we meet with noises so violent, or so jarring, as to offend our ears? is not there rather provided for us, wherever we go, some kind of harmony grateful to them; not only in fields and woods the sweet chirping of birds; by rivers the soft warbling of the streams; but even the rude winds whistle in a tune not unpleasant; the tossing seas yield a kind of solemn and graver melody? All the air about us, is it not (not only not noisome to our smell, but) very comfortable and

refreshing? and doth not even the dirty earth yield a wholesome and medicinal scent? So many, so plain, so exactly congruous are the relations of things here about us each to other; which surely could not otherwise come than from one admirable wisdom and power conspiring thus to adapt and connect them together; as also from an equal goodness, declared in all these things being squared so fitly for mutual benefit and convenience. These considerations are applicable to all (even to the meaner sorts of) animals; which being the only creatures capable of joy and pleasure, or liable to grief and pain, it was fit, that insensible things should be disposed to serve their needs and uses, which hath been with so wonderful a care performed, that of so vast a number among them there is none so vile or contemptible, (no worm, no fly, no insect,) for whose maintenance, whose defence, whose satisfaction, competent (shall I say, or abundant) provision hath not been made, both intrinsical (by a frame of organs fitting them to obtain and to enjoy what is good for them, to shun and repel what is bad; by strong appetites inciting them to search after and pursue, or to beware and decline respectively; by strange instincts enabling them to distinguish between what is fit for them to procure or embrace, to remove or avoid;) and being extrinsical also, by a great variety of conveniences, answerable to their several desires and needs, dispersed all about, and every where, as it were, offered to them. So that the holy psalmist (considering this, and taking on him to be, as it were, their chaplain) had reason to say this grace for them: 'The eyes of all wait on thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season; thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' But especially (that which as reason enables us, so due gratitude obliges us, and prompts us especially to observe) there is an evident regard (so evident, that even Pliny, a professed Epicurean, could not forbear acknowleging it) which all things bear to man, the prince of creatures visible; they being all as on purpose ordered to yield tribute unto him; to supply his wants, to gratify his desires; with profit and pleasure to exercise his faculties; to content, as it were, even his humor and curiosity. All things about us do minister (or at least may do so, if we would improve the natural instruments, and the

opportunities afforded us) to our preservation, ease, or delight. The hidden bowels of the earth yield us treasure of metals and minerals, quarries of stone and coal, so necessary, so serviceable to divers good uses, that we could not commodiously be without them; the vilest and most common stones we tread on (even in that we tread on them) are useful, and serve to many good purposes beside: the surface of the earth how is it bespread all over, as a table well furnished, with a variety of delicate fruits, herbs, and grains to nourish our bodies, to please our tastes, to cheer our spirits, to cure our diseases! how many fragrant and beautiful flowers offer themselves for the comfort of our smell, and the delight of our sight! Neither can our ears complain, since every wood breeds a quire of natural musicians, ready to entertain them with easy and unaffected harmony. The woods, I say, which also adorned with stately trees afford us a pleasant view and a refreshing shade, shelter from weather and sun, fuel for our fires, materials for our houses and our shipping; with divers other needful utensils. Even the barren mountains send us down fresh streams of water so necessary to the support of our lives, so profitable for the fructification of our grounds, so commodious for conveyance of our wares, and maintaining intercourse among us. Yea the wide seas are not (altogether improfitable) wastes; but freely yield us without our tillage, many rich harvests, transmitting our commerce and traffic, furnishing our tables with stores of dainty fish, supplying the bottles of heaven with waters to refresh the earth, being inexhaustible cisterns, from whence our rivers and fountains are derived; the very rude and boisterous winds themselves fulfil God's word (which once commanded all things to be good, and approved them to be so) by yielding manifold services to us; in brushing and cleansing the air for our health, in driving forward our ships, (which without their friendly help could not stir,) in gathering together, in scattering, in spreading abroad the clouds; the clouds, those paths of God, 'which drop fatness' on our fields and pastures. As for our living subjects, all the inferior sorts of animals, it is hardly possible to reckon the manifold benefits we receive from them; how many ways they supply our needs with pleasant food and convenient clothing, how they ease our

labor, how they promote even our recreation and sport. Thus have all things on this earth (as is fit and seemly they should have) by the wise and gracious disposal of the great Creator, a reference to the benefit of its noblest inhabitant, most worthy and most able to use them: many of them have an immediate reference to man, (as necessary to his being, or conducible to his well-being; being fitted thereto, to his hand, without his care, skill, or labor,) others a reference to him more mediate indeed, yet as reasonable to suppose; I mean such things, whose usefulness doth in part depend on the exercise of our reason, and the instruments subservient thereto: for what is useful by the help of reason, doth as plainly refer to the benefit of a thing naturally endowed with that faculty, as what is agreeable to sense refers to a thing merely sensitive: we may therefore, for instance, as reasonably suppose that iron was designed for our use, though first we be put to dig for it, then must employ many arts, and much pains before it become fit for our use; as that the stones were therefore made, which lie open to our view; and without any preparation we easily apply to the pavement of our streets, or the raising of our fences: also, the grain we sow in our grounds, or the trees which we plant in our orchards, we have reason to conceive as well provided for us, as those plants which grow wildly and spontaneously; for that sufficient means are bestowed on us of compassing such ends, and rendering those things useful to us, (a reason able to contrive what is necessary in order thereto, and a hand ready to execute,) it being also reasonable that something should be left for the improvement of our reason, and employment of our industry, lest our noblest powers should languish and decay by sloth or want of fit exercise.

Well then, is it to a fortuitous necessity (or a necessary chance) that we owe all these choice accommodations and pre-eminences of nature? must we bless and worship fortune for all this? did she so especially love us, and tender our good? was she so indulgent toward us, so provident for us in so many things, in every thing; making us the scope of all her workings and motions here about us? Must we change style, and say, fortune pours down blessings on our heads, fortune crowns us with loving-kindness, fortune daily loads us with her benefits?

Shall we not only esteem these good things her gifts, but even acknowlege ourselves her offsprings, and reverence her as our mother; disclaiming so noble a parent, as Wisdom Omnipotent; disowning so worthy a benefactor, as Sovereign Goodness? O brutish degeneracy! O hellish depravedness of mind! Are we not, not only wretchedly blind and stupid, if we are not able to discern so clear beams of wisdom shining through so many perspicuous correspondences; if we cannot trace the Divine power by footsteps so express and remarkable; if we cannot read so legible characters of transcendent goodness; but extremely unworthy and ungrateful, if we are not ready to acknowlege, and with hearty thankfulness to celebrate all these excellent perfections, by which all these things have been so ordered, as to conspire and co-operate for our benefit? Methinks the very perception of so much good, the continual enjoyment of so many accommodations, the frequent satisfaction of so many senses and appetites, should put us in so good humor, that when we feel our hearts replenished with food and gladness, when we so delightfully relish nature's dainties, when we with pleasure view this fair scene of things, when our ears are ravished with harmonious sounds, when our spirits are exhilarated with those natural perfumes shed about our gardens, our woods, and our fields, we should not be able to forbear devoutly crying out with the psalmist; 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches:' 'The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy and bounty;' 'Lord, what is man, that thou art so mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him?' that thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and hast put all things under his feet?' Under his feet: and such in a manner, according to proper and direct meaning, are all those things which we have as yet touched on; so many arguments of the Divinity even looking downwards, as it were, (if we do not look so rather like beasts than men,) we may on this little spot of our habitation perceive: but if, employing our peculiar advantage, we lift up our eyes and minds toward heaven, there in a larger volume, and in a brighter character, we shall behold the testimonies of perfection, and majesty stupendous described: as our eyes are

dazzled with the radiant light coming thence, so must the vast amplitude, the stately beauty, the decent order, the steady course, the beneficial efficacy of those glorious lamps, astonish our minds, fixing their attention on them; he that shall, I say, consider with what precise regularity, and what perfect constancy those (beyond our imagination) vast bodies perform their rapid motions, what pleasure, comfort, and advantage their light and heat do yield us, how their kindly influences conduce to the general preservation of all things here below, (impregnating the womb of this cold and dull lump of earth with various sorts of life, with strange degrees of activity,) how necessary (or how convenient at least) the certain recourses of seasons made by them are; how can he but wonder, and wondering adore that transcendency of beneficent wisdom and power, which first disposed them into, which still preserves them in, such a state and order? That all of them should be so regulated, as for so many ages together, (even through all memories of time,) to persist in the same posture, to retain the same appearances, not to alter discernibly in magnitude, in shape, in situation, in distance from each other; but to abide fixed, as it were, in their unfixedness, and steady in their restless motions; not to vary at all sensibly in the time of their revolution, (so that one year was ever observed to differ in an hour, or one day in a minute from another,) doth it not argue a constant will directing them, and a mighty hand upholding them? it did so, Plutarch tells us, to the common apprehensions of men in ancient times; who from these observations deduced the existence and notion of a God; because, saith he, 'they took notice that the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars, taking their course about the earth, did constantly arise alike in their colors, equal in their bignesses, in the same places, and at the same times.'* Reason dictated to them what the inspired psalmist sings concerning the heavenly host; that God 'commanded, and they were created; he hath also stablished them for ever and ever, by a decree that should not pass.' And surely, those celestial squadrons could never be ranged in a form so proper, and march on so regularly without the mar-

* Plut. de Plac. i. 6.

shalling, and without the conduct of a most skilful captain. He that can seriously ascribe all this to an undisciplined and unconducted troop of atoms rambling up and down confusedly through the field of infinite space, what might he not as easily assert or admit? Certainly, he that can think so, can think any thing; and labor were vainly spent in farther endeavor to convince him. So even Pagan philosophers have judged; on whom what impression this consideration hath made, we may learn from these words of one among them, Cicero: 'Who,' saith he, 'would call him a man, that beholding such certain motions of heaven, thus settled ranks of stars, all things there so connected and suited together, should deny there were a reason in them, or should affirm those things done by chance, which by no understanding we can reach with how great counsel they are performed? And, 'What other thing,' adds he, 'can be so open and so perspicuous, to us that shall behold the heavens and contemplate things celestial, as that there is a most excellent Divinity, by which these things are governed?'* Thus do 'the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork:' yea, thus we have reason to acknowlege with Nehemiah; 'Thou, even thou, art the Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all.' Thus, every thing above and below us, before and behind, on this, on that, on every side of us, yields more than a simple attestation to the existence of its glorious Maker; each of them singly, several of them together, giving their vote and suffrage thereto.

III. Yea, which was the last consideration intimated, all of them join together in one universal consort, with one harmonious voice, to proclaim one and the same wisdom to have designed, one and the same power to have produced, one and the same goodness to have set both wisdom and power on work in designing and in producing their being; in preserving and governing it: for this whole system of things what is it, but one goodly body, as it were, compacted of several members and organs; so aptly compacted together, that each confers its

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 38. Ibid. ii. 2.

being and its operation to the grace and ornament, to the strength and stability of the whole; one soul (of Divine providence) enlivening in a manner, and actuating it all? Survey it all over, and we shall have reason to say with the philosopher; 'All the parts of the world are so constituted, that they could not be either better for use, nor more beautiful for show.'* In it we shall espy nothing in substance superfluous or defective; nothing in shape deformed, in position misplaced, in motion exorbitant, so as to prejudice the beauty or welfare of the whole. We may perhaps not discern the use of each part, or the tendency of each particular effect; but of many they are so plain and palpable, that reason obliges us to suppose the like of the rest. Even as a person whom we observe frequently to act with great consideration and prudence, when at other times we cannot penetrate the drift of his proceedings, we must yet imagine that he hath some latent reason, some reach of policy, that we are not aware of; or, as in an engine consisting of many parts, curiously combined, whereof we do perceive the general use, and apprehend how divers parts thereof conduce thereto, reason prompts us (although we neither see them all, nor can comprehend the immediate serviceableness of some) to think they are all in some way or other subservient to the artist's design: such an agent is God, the wisdom of whose proceedings being in so many instances notorious, we ought to suppose it answerable in the rest; such an engine is this world, of which we may easily enough discern the general end, and how many of its parts do conduce thereto; and cannot therefore in reason but suppose the rest in their kind alike congruous, and conducible to the same purpose: our incapacity to discover all doth not argue any defect, but an excess of wisdom in the design thereof; not too little perfection in the work, but too great an one rather, in respect to our capacity: however, we plainly see the result of all to be the durable continuance of things, without interruption or change, in the same constant uniform state; which shows that in the world there is no seed of corruption, as it were; no inclination to dissolution or decay; nothing that tends to the

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 34.

discomposure or destruction of the whole: each ingredient thereof (of those so unconceivably numerous) consists within its proper limits; not incroaching immoderately on, not devouring or disturbing another in its course; contrary qualities therein serving to a due temperament, opposite inclinations begetting a just poise, particular vicissitudes conferring to a general settlement; private deaths and corruptions maintaining the public life and health, producing a kind of youthful vigor in the whole: so that six thousand years together hath this great machine stood, always one and the same, unimpaired in its beauty, unworn in its parts, unwearied and undisturbed in its motions. If then, as Plutarch says, 'no fair thing is ever produced by hazard, but with art framing it;'* how could this most fair comprehension of all fair things be not the lawful issue of art, but a by-blow of fortune; of fortune, the mother only of broods monstrous and misshapen? †If the nature of any cause be discoverable by its effects; if from any work we may infer the workman's ability; if in any case the results of wisdom are distinguishable from the consequences of chance, we have reason to believe that the Architect of this magnificent and beautiful frame was one incomprehensibly wise, powerful, and good Being; and to conclude with Cicero, *Esse præstantem aliquam æternamque naturam, et eam suspiciendam, adorandamque hominum generi pulchritudo mundi, ordoque rerum cœlestium cogit confiteri*; the sense of which saying we cannot better render or express, than in St. Paul's words, 'The invisible things of God by the making (or rather by the make and constitution) of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;' so that, I adjoin after him, 'they are inexcusable, who from hence do not know God;' or knowing him do not render unto him his due glory and service.

* Plut. de Plac. i. 6. † Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 37.

SUMMARY OF SERMON VII.

GENESIS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 27.

THE belief of God's existence is the foundation of all religion: hence the usefulness of such discourses as tend to establish that foundation by convincing arguments: this topic enlarged on.

Subject of the present discourse, the consideration of man, both as taken singly, and in conjunction with the rest of his kind.

I. We may consider any one single man, who consists of two parts, the one external or material, the other, that interior invisible principle of operations peculiarly called human: the former has been, as it were, discussed: the latter is now chiefly taken into consideration; and in this express signs of the Creator may be discovered.

1. And first, that man's nature did proceed from some efficient cause, it will (as of other things in nature) be reasonable to suppose; for if not so, it must either have sprung up of itself, so that at some time, or from all eternity, some one man, or some number of men did of themselves exist; or there hath been a succession, without beginning, of continual generations, &c.: both these suppositions shown to be absurd.

2. It could not come from any sensible or material cause, nor from any complication of such causes; for the properties, powers, and operations of man's soul are wholly different from in kind, highly elevated in worth, above all the properties, powers, and operations of things corporeal, however framed or tempered: this topic enlarged on.

3. We are not only God's works, but his children; our souls bearing in their countenance and complexion various express features of him; especially as they were made at first, and as by improvement they may again become: this fully shown.

II. Thus doth human nature, being in each singular man, show the existence of God, as its original author. Considering also men as related and combined together in society, some glimpse of Divine power and wisdom, ordering them towards it, and preserving them in it, may be perceived.

As in the natural world, the parts thereof are fitted with admirable propriety, in varieties of size, of quality, of aptitude to motion, &c.; so in the world political we may observe various propensities and aptitudes, disposing men to combine together and co-operate in society; all things being so ordered, that even contrarieties of humor serve to settle them in their due place and posture, &c. And since it is plainly best for man thus to live in society, the fact that he is so disposed and suited thereto, is an argument of mighty wisdom and goodness in that cause from whence all this proceeded; and such a cause is God. The same also may be reasonably deduced from the care and preservation of society; for though man be inclined to and fitted for it, yet being a free agent, no ordinary banks will constantly restrain him in due place and order; so that the course of affairs, perverted by some men's irregular passions, would run into confusion, without a wise and provident superintendence: this topic enlarged on. Conclusion.

I Believe in God,

SERMON VII.

THE BEING OF GOD PROVED FROM THE FRAME OF HUMAN NATURE.

GENESIS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 27.

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.

If the belief of God's existence, which is the foundation of all religion, be not well laid in our minds by convincing reasons, the superstructures standing thereon may easily be in danger of being shaken and ruined; especially being assailed by the winds of temptation and opposition, which every where blow so violently in this irreligious age. No discourses therefore can perhaps be more needful, (or seasonably useful,) than such as do produce and urge reasons of that kind, apt to establish that foundation. Of such there be, I conceive, none better, or more suitable to common capacity, than those which are drawn from effects apparent to men's general observation and experience, the which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause than unto God; that is, (according to the notion commonly answering to that name,) to a Being incomprehensibly wise, powerful, and good. Of such effects there be innumerably many in this sensible world, among things natural, more strictly so called, that is, subsisting and acting without immediate use of understanding or choice; the consti-

tutions and operations of which (being evidently directed according to very much reason, and to very good purpose) do evince their being framed and ordered by such a Being; as I have formerly, with a competent largeness, endeavored to show. But beside those, there is exposed to our observation, yea subject to our inward conscience, another sort of beings, acting in another manner, and from other principles; having in them a spring of voluntary motion and activity; not, as the rest, necessarily determined, or driven on, by a kind of blind violence, in one direct road to one certain end; but guiding themselves with judgment and choice, by several ways, toward divers ends; briefly, endued with reason, to know what and why; and with liberty, to choose what and how they should act; and that this sort of beings (that is, we ourselves, all mankind) did proceed from the same source or original cause, as it is in way of history delivered and affirmed in our text, so I shall now endeavor by reason (apt to persuade even those, who would not allow this sacred authority) to show. Indeed, if the 'eternal power and divinity of God may,' as St. Paul tells us, 'be seen in all the works of God;' the same peculiarly and principally will appear observable in this masterpiece, as it were, of the great Artificer; if the meanest creatures reflect somewhat of light, by which we may discern the Divine existence and perfections; in this fine and best polished mirror we shall more clearly discover the same: nowhere so much of God will appear as in this work, which was designedly formed to resemble and represent him. This then is the subject of our present discourse, That in man, well considered, we may discern manifest footsteps of that incomprehensibly excellent Being impressed on him; and this doubly, both in each man singly taken, and in men as standing in conjunction or relation to each other: considering man's nature, we shall have reason to think it to have proceeded from God; considering human societies, we shall see cause to suppose them designed and governed by God.

I. Consider we first any one single man, or that human nature abstractedly, whereof each individual person doth partake; and whereas that doth consist of two parts, one material and external, whereby man becomes a sensible part of nature, and

hath an eminent station among visible creatures; the other, that interior and invisible principle of operations peculiarly called human: as to the former, we did, among other such parts of nature, take cognisance thereof, and even in that discovered plain marks of a great wisdom that made it, of a great goodness taking care to maintain it. The other now we shall chiefly consider, in which we may discern not only σημεῖα, but ὁμοιώματα, of the Divine existence and efficiency; not only large tracks, but express footsteps; not only such signs as smoke is of fire, or a picture of the painter that drew it; but even such, as the spark is of fire, and the picture of its original.

1. And first, that man's nature did proceed from some efficient cause, it will (as of other things in nature) be reasonable to suppose. For if not so, then it must either spring up of itself, so that at some determinate beginning of time, or from all eternity, some one man, or some number of men did of themselves exist; or there hath been a succession, without beginning, of continual generations indeterminate (not terminated in any root, one or more, of singular persons).

Now, generally, that man did not at any time in any manner spring up of himself, appears, 1. From history and common tradition; which (as we shall otherwhere largely show) deliver the contrary; being therein more credible than bare conjecture or precarious assertion, destitute of testimony or proof. 2. From the present constant manner of man's production, which is not by spontaneous emergency, but in way of successive derivation, according to a method admirably provided for by nature. 3. Because if ever man did spring up of himself, it should be reasonable that at any time, that often, that at least sometime in so long a course of times, the like should happen, which yet no experience doth attest. 4. There is an evident relation between our bodies and souls; the members and organs of our bodies being wonderfully adapted to serve the operations of our souls. Now in our bodies (as we have before showed) there appear plain arguments of a most wise Author, that contrived and framed them; therefore in no likelihood did our souls arise of themselves, but owe their being to the same wise Cause.

Also particularly, that not any men did at some beginning of time spring up of themselves is evident, because there is even in the thing itself a repugnance; and it is altogether unconceivable that any thing, which once hath not been, should ever come to be without receiving its being from another: and supposing such a rise of any thing, there could not in any case be any need of an efficient cause; since any thing might purely out of nothing come to be of itself.

Neither could any man so exist from eternity, both from the general reasons assigned, which being grounded in the nature of the thing, and including no respect to this circumstance of now and then, do equally remove this supposition, (for what is in itself unapt or unnecessary or improbable to be now, was always alike so; the being from eternity or in time not altering the nature of the thing;) and also particularly, because there are no footsteps or monuments of man's (not to say eternal, but even) ancient standing in the world; but rather many good arguments (otherwhere touched) of his late coming thereinto; which consideration did even convince Epicurus and his followers, and made them acknowlege man to be a novel production. I add, seeing it is necessary to suppose some eternal and self-subsistent Being distinct from man, and from any other particular sensible being, (for there is no such being, which in reason can be supposed author of the rest; but rather all of them bear characters signifying their original from a Being more excellent than themselves;) and such an one being admitted, there is no need or reason to suppose any other, (especially man and all others appearing unapt so to subsist,) therefore it is not reasonable to ascribe eternal self-subsistence to man. This discourse I confirm with the suffrage of Aristotle himself; who in his Physics hath these words: 'In natural things, that which is definite and better, if possible, must rather exist: but it suffices that one, the first of things immovble, being eternal, should be to others the original of motion;' (I subjoin, and by parity of reason it is sufficient, that one and the best thing be eternally subsistent of itself, and the cause of subsistence to the rest.)

As for the last supposition, that there have been indeterminate successions of men, without beginning, it is also liable to

most of the former exceptions, beside that it is altogether unintelligible, and its having this peculiar difficulty in it, that it ascribes determinate effects to causes indeterminate. And indeed it hath been to no other purpose introduced, than to evade the arguments arising from the nature of the thing, by confounding the matter with impertinent intrigues, such as the terms of infinite and indeterminate must necessarily produce in man's shallow understanding. I therefore, on such grounds, assume it as a reasonable supposition, that man's nature is nowise *αὐτοφυὴς*, but hath proceeded from some cause.

2. I adjoin, secondly, that it could not come from any sensible or material cause, nor from any complication of such causes; for that the properties, the powers, the operations of man's soul are wholly different from in kind, highly elevated in worth, above all the properties, powers, and operations of things corporeal, in what imaginable manner soever framed or tempered: the properties, faculties, and operations of our souls are, or refer to, several sorts or ways of knowlege, (sense, fancy, memory, discourse, mental intuition;) of willing, (that is, of appetite toward and choice of good, or of disliking and refusing evil;) of passion, (that is, of sensible complacency or displeasure in respect to good and evil apprehended under several notions and circumstances;) of *αὐτοκινησία*, or self-moving, (the power and act of moving without any force extrinsical working on it.) The general properties of things corporeal are extension according to several dimensions and figures; aptness to receive motion from, or to impart motion unto, each other in several degrees and proportions of velocity; to divide and unite, or to be divided and united each by other; and the like, coherent with and resulting from these: now to common sense it seems evident that those properties and these are *toto genere* different from each other; nor have any conceivable similitude unto, connexion with, dependence on each other, as to their immediate nature. Let any part of this corporeal mass be refined by the subtlest division, let it be agitated by the quickest motion, let it be modelled into what shape or fashion you please; how can any man imagine either knowlege or appetite or passion thence to result? or that it should thence acquire a power of moving itself, or another adjacent body? Even, I say, this

inferior locomotive faculty is too high for matter, by any change it can undergo, to obtain: for we (as inward experience, or conscience of what we do may teach us) determine ourselves commonly to action, and move the corporeal instruments subject to our will and command, not by force of any precedent bodily impression or impulse, but either according to mere pleasure, or in virtue of somewhat spiritual and abstracted from matter, acting on us, not by a physical energy, but by moral representation, in a manner more easily conceived than expressed; (for no man surely is so dull that he cannot perceive a huge difference between being dragged by a violent hand, and drawn to action by a strong reason; although it may puzzle him to express that difference): such a proposition of truth, such an apprehension of events possible, such an appearance of good or evil consequent, (things no where existent without us, nor having in them any thing of corporeal subsistence; nor therefore capable of corporeal operation,) are all the engines that usually impel us to action; and these, by a voluntary application of our minds, (by collecting and digesting, severing and rejecting, sifting and moulding the present single representations of things, by an immediate interior power, independent from any thing without us,) we frame within ourselves. And even such a self-moving or self-determining power we cannot anywise conceive to be in, or to arise from, any part of this corporeal mass, however shaped or fixed, however situated or agitated: much less can we well apprehend the more noble faculties to be seated in or to spring from it; of them the grossest and the finest, the slowest and the nimblest, the roughest and the smoothest bodies are alike capable, or rather unlike, uncapable. To think a gross body may be ground and pounded into rationality, a slow body may be thumped and driven into passion, a rough body may be filed and polished into a faculty of discerning and resenting things; that a cluster of pretty thin round atoms, (as Democritus forsooth conceited,) that a well mixed combination of elements, (as Empedocles fancied,) that a harmonious contemperation (or crasis) of humors, (as Galen, dreaming it seems on his drugs and his potions, would persuade us,) that an implement made up of I know not what fine springs, and wheels, and such mechanic knacks, (as some of our mo-

dern wizards have been busy in divining,) should, without more to do, become the subject of so rare capacities and endowments, the author of actions so worthy, and works so wonderful; capable of wisdom and virtue, of knowlege so vast, and of desires so lofty; apt to contemplate truth and affect good; able to recollect things past, and to foresee things future; to search so deep into the causes of things, and disclose so many mysteries of nature; to invent so many arts and sciences, to contrive such projects of policy, and achieve such feats of prowess; briefly, should become capable to design, undertake, and perform all those admirable effects of human wit and industry which we daily see and hear of; how senseless and absurd conceits are these! how can we, without great indignation and regret, entertain such suppositions! No, no: it is both ridiculous fondness and monstrous baseness for us to own any parentage from, or any alliance to, things so mean, so very much below us. It is indeed observable that no man can well, or scarce any man hath disowned the receiving his being from God, but hath also in a manner disavowed his own being what he is; that no man denying God hath not also withal denied himself; denied himself to be a man; renounced his reason, his liberty, and other perfections of his nature; rather than acknowlege himself so well descended, hath been ready to confess himself no more than a beast, yea much less than probably beasts are; a mere corporeal machine, a ball of fate and chance, a thing violently tossed and tumbled up and down by bodies all about it. But let these degenerate men vilify their own nature, and disparage themselves as they please, yet those noble perfections of our soul speak its extraction from a higher stock; we cannot, if we consider them well, but acknowlege that,

Mentem e cœlesti demissam traximus arce;

or, as Epicharmus said of old, that 'man's reason did sprout from the Divine reason;'* they plainly discover their original to be from a cause itself understanding and knowing, willing freely, resenting things, (if I may so speak,) and moving of itself in a more excellent manner and degree.

* Epic. Cl. Alex. Ser. v. pag. 441.

And indeed it is very considerable to our purpose, that while we assert the existence of God, we assert no other thing to be, than such as whereof we can assign a manifest instance or example, as it were, although in degree much inferior; for what can in any degree exist, it is not hard to conceive that possible to exist in any degree, how high soever; what is in kind possible, is in any perfection of degree possible; yea, what we see in a lower degree somewhere to exist, doth probably otherwhere exist in higher perfection. There is therefore scarce any attribute commonly ascribed to God, the existence whereof we cannot show possible, yea very credible, by showing some degree, (I use this word in a large and popular sense, not regarding scholastical nicety,) some participation, some semblance (or, if you please, some shadow) thereof discernible in man; he being indeed a small picture, as it were, wherein God hath drawn and represented himself, giving us to read that of himself in this small volume, which in its proper character and size we could never be able to apprehend; each letter, each line of his excellency being in itself too large for our eye perfectly to view and comprehend.

3. We are, I say, not only God's works, but his children; our souls bearing in their countenance and complexion divers express features of him; especially as at first they were made, and as by improvement of our capacities they may again become. In the substance of man's soul, in its union with things corporeal, in its properties and powers, we may observe divers such resemblances, declaring it in a manner to be what Seneca did say of it, 'a little God harboured in human body.' For as God, (inhabiting light inaccessible,) being himself invisible, and subject to no sense, discovers himself by manifold effects of wisdom and power; so doth our soul, itself immediately exposed to no sense, show itself by many works of art and industry, wherein she imitates nature and the works of God; although her works in fineness and greatness do indeed come infinitely short of his.

As God by his presence and influence doth, as the philosopher speaks,* 'contain and keep together the whole frame of

* Arist. de Mundo.

things,' so that he withdrawing them, it would fall of itself into corruption and ruin; so doth the soul, by its union and secret energy on the body, connect the parts of its body, and preserve it from dissolution, which presently, they being removed, do follow.

As he, in a manner beyond our conception, without any proper extension or composition of parts, doth coexist with, penetrateth, and passeth through all things; so is she, in a manner also unconceivable, every where present within her bounds, and penetrates all the dimensions of her little world.

As he incomprehensibly, by a word of his mind, or by a mere act of will, doth move the whole frame or any part of nature; so doth she, we cannot tell how, by thinking only, and by willing, wield her body, and determine any member thereof to motion.

As he, not confined by the extension or duration of things, doth at one simple view behold all things, not only present, but past and future, yea, whenever, wherever, however possible; so doth she, making wide excursions out of her narrow mansion in an instant, as it were, or with a marvellous agility, transcend any fixed bounds of time or place; surveys in her thought the most remote regions, stopping no where, and passing over the world's bounds into spaces void and imaginary; reviews ages long since past, and looks forward into those long after to come; sees things in their causes, and, as it were, beyond them, even the possibilities of things that never shall be.

As he performs nothing rashly or vainly, but always with wisest design to the best end; so doth she never set herself on action without some drift, or aim at good apparent to her.

As he among all the agitations and changes of things without him abides himself immovable, impassible, and immutable; so is she, immediately at least, not disturbed, not altered, not affected by the various motions that surround her; they do not touch her, they cannot stir her; among the many tumults and tempests blustering all about her, she can retain a steady calm and rest: Aristotle himself concluded her to be unmovable, impassible, unmixed, and uncompounded. So fair characters are there of the Divine nature engraven on man's soul: but one chief property thereof we have not as yet touched; whereof, alas! the

lineaments are more faint and less discernible; they being in themselves originally most tender and delicate, and thence apt by our unhappy degeneration to suffer the most, and have thence accordingly been most defaced; goodness I mean; whereof yet, I shall not doubt to say, many goodly relics are extant, and may be observed therein. There do remain, dispersed in the soil of human nature, divers seeds of goodness, of benignity, of ingenuity, which being cherished, excited, and quickened by good culture, do, to common experience, thrust out flowers very lovely, yield fruits very pleasant of virtue and goodness. We see that even the generality of men are prone to approve the laws and rules directing to justice, sincerity, and beneficence; to commend actions suitable unto them, to honor persons practising according to them; as also to distaste, detest, or despise such men, whose principles or tempers incline them to the practice of injury, fraud, malice, and cruelty; yea, even them men generally are apt to dislike, who are so addicted to themselves, as to be backward to do good to others. Yea no man can act according to those rules of justice and goodness without satisfaction of mind; no man can do against them without inward self-condemnation and regret, (as St. Paul did observe for us.) No man hardly is so savage, in whom the receiving kindnesses doth not beget a kindly sense, and an inclination (*eo nomine*, for that cause barely) to return the like; which inclination cannot well be ascribed to any other principle than somewhat of ingenuity innate to man.

All men, I suppose, feel in themselves (if at least not hardened by villainous custom) a disposition prompting them to commiserate, yea (even with some trouble and some damage to themselves) to succor and relieve them who are in want, pain, or any distress; even mere strangers, and such from whom they can expect no return of benefit or advantage to themselves.

Many examples occur, in experience and in history, of men who, from dictates of common reason and natural inclinations, (which in this case are not to be separated, both arising from the same source of human nature,) have been very apt freely and liberally to impart unto others somewhat of any good thing they possessed; to sacrifice their own ease, pleasure, profit unto others' benefit; to undergo great pains and hazards for

public good, (the good of their family, of their friends, of their country, of mankind in general;) and all this without any hope of recompense; except perhaps that commonly they might have some regard to the approbation and acceptance, to the good-will and gratitude of them, whom their beneficence obliged; which in real esteem is no great derogation to their noble performances; and argues only, there is, together with such a laudable benignity or goodness of nature, (to excite and enliven it,) implanted a natural ambition also, or generosity in man's soul; which being well moderated seems not culpable; since God himself, in return to his most free beneficence, doth expect and require somewhat of thanks and praise; so much as we are able to render to him.

Yea, (although our adversaries will scarce admit so much, for that not supposing any good original, they are unwilling to allow any good derivative; they are as ready to exclude all humanity as divinity; they have commonly, as no opinion of God, so no good opinion of men; feeling little good in themselves, they are willing to think less to be in others; so projecting to excuse themselves, and shroud their own particular faults under the covert of a general naughtiness,) I doubt not to say, there have been many persons in all ages full of very single and sincere good-will toward men, heartily desiring the public good, and compassionating the evils of mankind; ready with their best endeavors to procure and promote the one, to prevent and remove the other, from principles of mere ingenuity or pure nobleness; that with unmovable resolution have persisted in courses tending to such ends, although in them they have encountered dangers, disgraces, and troubles from the ingrateful world, or rather from some men prevalent therein, their envy or spite.

In fine, the wisest observers of man's nature have pronounced him to be a creature gentle and sociable, inclinable to and fit for conversation, apt to keep good order, to observe rules of justice, to embrace any sort of virtue, if well managed, if instructed by good discipline, if guided by good example, if living under the influence of wise laws and virtuous governors. Fierceness, rudeness, craft, malice, all perverse and intractable, all mischievous and vicious dispositions do grow among

men (like weeds in any, even the best soil) and overspread the earth, from neglect of good education; from ill conduct, ill custom, ill example; (it is the comparison of St. Chrysostom and of Plutarch.) It is favor therefore, I conceive, to their own habitual depravations of nature (or perhaps to some prejudicate opinions) which hath induced some men to make so disadvantageous a portraiture of human nature, in which nothing lightsome or handsome, no lines of candor or rectitude do appear, but all seems black and crooked; all is drawn over with dusky shades, and irregular features of base designfulness, and malicious cunning; of suspicion, malignity, rapacity; which character were it true, (in that general extent, and not proper only to some mousters among men,) we need not farther seek for hell, since as many men, so many fiends appear unto us. But so commodious living here; so many offices daily performed among men, of courtesy, mercy, and pity; so many constant observances of friendship and amity; so many instances of fidelity and gratitude; so much credit always (even among Pagans and Barbarians) preserved to justice and humanity, (humanity, that very name doth fairly argue for us,) do sufficiently confute those defamers and slanderers of mankind; do competently evidence that all good inclinations are not quite banished the world, nor quite razed out of man's soul; but that even herein human nature doth somewhat resemble its excellent original, the nature Divine.

Thus doth man's nature in its substance, as it were, its faculties, its manner of operation, resemble God: but we may farther observe, that as children are indeed in complexion and feature usually born somewhat like to their parents, but grow daily more like unto them, (those smaller lineaments continually with their bulk and stature increasing and becoming more discernible;) so is man improvable to more exact resemblance of God; his soul hath appetites and capacities, by which well guided and ordered, it soars and climbs continually in its affection and desire toward Divine perfection. Man hath an insatiable curiosity and greediness of knowlege, ('his eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor his ear filled with hearing;') he never rests content with, but in a manner despises the notions already acquired; always striving to enlarge and enrich

his mind with intellectual treasure. So doth he tend nearer to Divine omniscience.

And as his searches after truth, so his desires of good are in a manner boundless. No present, no definite good can long detain his liking, or fully content him: he soon doth suck it dry, and leaves it insipid; then longs and hunts after fresh entertainments: he seems poor to himself in the greatest plenty, and straitened in the most ample condition. In short, he ever aspires to somewhat more great and high than what he enjoys; finding in himself a kind of infinite (at least indefinite) ambition and covetousness, a restless tendency after farther degrees of joy and happiness, so doth he shoot himself on toward that highest mark of Divine felicity.

Being sensible of his own mortal and transitory condition, he yet seeks to live for ever in his name and memory, labors to perform memorable actions, rears lasting monuments of his art and knowlege, of his wealth and power, of his bounty and munificence, by all means studying and striving to commend himself to the regard of posterity; thus affects he another sort of likeness unto God, even a kind of immortality and eternity.

If also, being through Divine grace awakened out of that drowsy state, (which naturally in great measure hath seized on all men,) he discovereth his moral or spiritual wants and imperfections; he is then apt to breathe and endeavor a nearer similitude to God, even in goodness, righteousness, and purity; to labor in getting continually his inclinations more rectified, and his passions better composed; in restraining, subduing, destroying inordinate self-love, with the sensuality, the perverseness, the pride, the malice growing from that evil root; in promoting all virtuous desires and affections, especially reverence toward God his father, and charity toward man his brother; neither then can he be at ease or well content, till he arrive in such dispositions of mind to that nearness of perfection which his capacities do admit. And a man thus qualified in degree, thus tending in desire toward higher perfection in goodness, is indeed the most lively image that can be framed of God; being, as St. Paul expresseth it, 'renewed to an acknowlegement (or better understanding of himself, of his Maker, of true good-

ness) according to the image of him that made him.' I might also propound to your consideration that φίλτρον φυσικὸν τὸ πρὸς τὸν κτίσαντα, (as one of our Fathers doth call it,) that 'natural proclivity observable in man to acknowlege and worship God;'* to embrace religion both in opinion and practice, and especially on all occasions of need or distress to have recourse unto him, as an argument of his relation to God. It is, we see, common in nature for all creatures to be readily acquainted with their parents, to run after them, to expect from them supply of wants, succor in straits, refuge and defence in dangers; from hence we may easily discern to what parent any child belongs: and since there appears the like instinct and capacity innate to man, (and indeed to him alone, whence some philosophers thought good from this property to define man, a creature capable of religion;) since he is apt to entertain notions of God, to bear in his mind awe and respect toward him; since he is ready in all his straits (when other helps and hopes fail him) to lift up his heart and voice toward Heaven for assistance; why may we not in like manner hence discern, and with like reason infer, that man is also in especial manner God's child and offspring?

I might also adjoin that the very power of framing conceptions, although imperfect and inadequate, concerning God, is in itself a faculty so very spiritual and sublime, that it argues something divine in man's soul. 'That like is known by its like,' was an axiom among ancient philosophers; and that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, is the rule of a better master in wisdom than they; and beasts surely, because not endued with reason, have no conceptions concerning man's nature or the matters proper to him, (according to what rules, by what methods, to what purposes he doth act;) so in likelihood should we not be able to apprehend and discourse about things appertaining to God, his nature, the methods and reasons of his proceedings; the notions of eternal truth, the indispensible laws of right, the natural differences of good and evil, with such like high objects of thought, except our souls had in

* Orig. in Cels. Testimonium animæ naturaliter religiosæ.—Tertull.

them some sparks of divine understanding; some cognation with, and communication from, heaven.

I shall to these only subjoin one farther consideration worth attending to; that the wisest and most considerate men in several times, only by reflecting on their own minds, and observing in them what was most lovely and excellent, most pure and straight, have fallen on, and conspired in notions concerning God, very suitable to those which we believe taught us by revelation; although contrary to the prejudices of their education, and to popular conceits: many admirable passages to this purpose we may find dropped from the mouth of Socrates and the pen of Plato; in Cicero, in Epictetus, yea, in the least credulous or fanciful of men, Aristotle himself. Whence plainly enough we may collect how near affinity there is between God and us; how legible characters of the divinity are written on our souls; how easily we may know God, if we be not ignorant of ourselves; that we need not go far to fetch arguments to prove that God is, nor to find lessons to learn what he is; since we always carry both about us, or rather within us; since our souls could indeed come from no other than such a Being, whom they so resemble and represent.

I have indulged my thoughts somewhat freely in this speculation, yet I hope not altogether impertinently, for that (as I alleged) in the chief of God's works (observable by us) we may reasonably suppose that his glory doth chiefly shine; and will therefore be most discernible to us, if we open our eyes and apply our minds thereto.

II. Thus doth human nature, being in each singular man, show the existence of God, as its original author and pattern; considering also men as related and combined together in society, some glimpse of a divine power and wisdom ordering them toward it, and preserving them in it, may be perceived. As in the world natural, the parts thereof are so fitted in varieties of size, of quality, of aptitude to motion, that all may stick together, (excluding chasms and varieties,) and all co-operate incessantly to the preservation of that common union and harmony which was there intended; so in the world political we may observe various propensions and aptitudes disposing men to collection and coherence and co-operation in society. They are apt

to flock together, not only from a kind of necessity, discovered by reason, for mutual help and defence; but from a natural love to company and conversation, with an aptness to delight therein, and from an inbred aversion to that solitude, wherein many great appetites natural to man must needs be stifled. They are also marvellously fitted to maintain intercourse not only by the principal guide thereof, reason, but by that great instrument of it, speech; whereby men impart, and, as it were, transfuse into one another, their inmost thoughts; which faculty doth evidently relate unto, and plainly shows men naturally designed for, society. In order thereto, men are also endued with several subordinate inclinations and qualifications (arising from different temper of body, or disposition of mind) requisite to cement society, and preserve it for a competent durance in peace and order; some few being made very sagacious and provident, and thence fit to direct others; very quick and active, thence able to execute; others of a high spirit and courage, thence affecting and disposed to command; most others being dull in conceit, or heavy of temper, or of a soft spirit, and thence apt to follow, content to rest in mean state, willing to obey. All these things being so ordered, that even contrarities of humor in men do serve to settle them in their due place and posture; to beget and preserve a peaceful union, and a decent harmony of action in society; which, supposing all men in ability and inclination more like or equal, (able to do, apt to affect the same things,) could hardly be; for then all men would be competitors and strugglers for the same thing, and so none would easily obtain, or peacefully enjoy it.

Now since it is plainly best for man to live thus in society, many great benefits thence accruing to him, (security to his life, safe enjoying the fruits of his industry, much ease by mutual assistance, much delight in conversation; all that civil people enjoy of convenience beyond barbarians and savages, or indeed above beasts,) that men are so disposed and suited thereto, is an argument of mighty wisdom and great goodness in that cause from whence all this proceeded; and such a cause is God.

Thus from the constitution of societies we may collect a provident care over human affairs; the same also may be reasonably

deduced from the preservation of them; for although man be inclined unto and fitted for society, yet being an agent very free and loose in his action, (acting contingently, and without necessary subjection to any settled law or rule, as do other things in nature,) no ordinary banks will constantly retain him in due place and order; so that the course of affairs, perverted by some men's irregular wills and passions, would run into great confusion, did not a wise care also continually govern things, seasonably interposing its hand, and thereby upholding, retaining, establishing them in order, or reducing them thereinto: did not a superintendent power restrain the fierceness of tyrants, the ambition of grandees, the greediness of oppressors, the wildness and precipitancy of factious multitudes: did not God sometime 'break the arm of the wicked;' or, as Job speaks, 'pour contempt on princes,' and 'weaken the strength of the mighty;' if he, 'that stilleth the noise of the seas,' did not also 'repress the tumults of the people.' Indeed, as in nature it is wisely provided that tigers, wolves, and foxes on the earth, that kites in the air, and sharks in the sea, shall not so multiply and abound, but that many tame and gentle creatures shall abide there by them; so among men, that (among divers fierce, ravenous, crafty, and mischievous men) so many poor, simple, and harmless people do make a shift to live here in competent safety, liberty, ease, and comfort, doth argue his especial overwatching care and governance, who (as we are, in conformity to experience, taught by sacred Scripture) hath an especial regard unto the poor and unto the meek; providing for them, and protecting them.

I might subjoin those significations of providence, which the general connection of mankind doth afford; things being so ordered, that several nations and societies shall be prompted, by need or by advantage mutual, to maintain correspondence and commerce with each other; under common laws and compacts, that so there should become a kind of union and harmony even among the several parts and elements, as it were, of the human world. I might consider the benefit that arises (as in the natural world from contrary qualities and motions, so) in the human world even from wars and contentions; how these rouse men from sloth, brush away divers vices, ferment and

purge things into a better condition: but I will not strive to be so minute and subtile.

Here I shall conclude these sorts of argumentation, inferring the existence of God from the common effects obvious to our sense and experience, either in the greater world of nature, or lesser world of man; by which God doth continually, in a still, though very audible voice, whisper this great truth into our ears. There be other sort of effects, more rare and extraordinary, which go above or against both those streams of natural and human things, whereby God doth more loudly, as it were, and expressly proclaim his being and providence; the consideration of which I shall reserve to another time.

'Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words, which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honor and praise of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON VIII.

PSALM XIX.—VERSES 3. 4.

THE Psalmist in this text observes and affirms the universality of religion. He supposes the heavens to speak an universal language, heard and understood by all people, glorifying God, and declaring him their Maker. On this supposition the present argument is grounded, to prove the existence of God. The argument is, according to Lactantius, that *universal and unanimous testimony of people and nations*, through all courses of time, *who*, otherwise differing in language, customs, and conceits, *only have agreed in this one matter of opinion*. Opinion of Aristotle as to degrees of probability: that which arises from this source approaches near to demonstrable truth. Testimonies of ancient philosophers to this agreement, as well as to its force and efficacy.

But if an adversary should refute the verdict of this grand jury, we may assert its authority, in respect also to the causes whence it proceeded, or from the manner by which this general consent can be conceived to have been produced and propagated among men.

That men should thus conspire in opinion must need arise either, 1. from a natural light implanted in man's nature; or, 2. from a common inclination in his soul; or, 3. from some prevalent reason, obvious to all men; or, 4. from some common fountain of instruction, or primitive tradition.

And from any one of these ways being allowed, our argument will gain weight and force. If we acknowlege either of

the two first, we do in effect yield the question: if nature forcibly drives men into this persuasion, how extravagant will it be to oppose her! And if we grant that plain reason, apparent to the generality of men, hath moved them to this consent, do we not, by dissenting from it, renounce common sense? But if we say that it arose in the last manner, from a common instruction or primitive tradition, we shall be thereby driven to inquire, who that common master, or author of the tradition was: of any such we have no name recorded; we find no time designated when it began to arise. Who then were the teachers, but the first parents of mankind? Thus does this consideration lead to another very advantageous to our purpose: that mankind hath proceeded from one common stock; which doubly confirms our assertion; first, as proving the generations of men had a beginning; secondly, as affording us their most weighty authority for the doctrine we assert. For, 1. supposing mankind had a beginning on this earth, whence could it proceed but from such a Being as we describe? This point enlarged on. 2. Supposing this notion derived from the first men, who instilled it into them? Why should they conceive themselves to come from God, if he that made them did not discover himself to them? This enlarged on.

Thus do these two notions, that of general tradition concerning God, and that concerning man's origin on earth from one stock, mutually support each other. And indeed concerning the latter, there be divers other arguments of the same kind confirming it, such as common opinions, stories, and practices, which cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Testimonies of Aratus and Cicero, as to our being God's offspring, and having our souls from his nature: those of Aristotle, Ovid, Plato, Seneca, &c. concerning similar opinions. Those of Plato and Cicero concerning man's having been once in a better state, and having fallen into a more wretched one.

Story of Pandora from Hesiod applicable to the evil introduced into the world by Eve. Other traditions from Plato, Plutarch, &c. instanced. These chiefly concern man.

Divers others concerning God and religion, sprouting probably from the same root: several of which are produced from Aristotle, &c. many collected by Clemens Alexandrinus.

To these may be added various evil customs, wherein most nations did from this cause probably conspire: for example, their stopping at decades, their adherence to the number 7 in the division of time, &c.

These traditions shown to have been, in substance, universally received, notwithstanding the negligence of some people, and the affected wisdom of others: also notwithstanding their adulteration through ignorance, fancy, craftiness, ambitious designs, &c. This argument summed up.

In the preceding discourses, the existence of God has been proved by arguments which more immediately evince those their principal attributes, wisdom, power, and goodness incomprehensible; but which also consequentially declare all the other attributes commonly esteemed ingredients of that notion which answers to the name of God.

The uniformity, concord, and perfect harmony which appears in the constitution and preservation of things; their conspiring to one end; their continuing in the same order and course, do plainly declare the unity of God. And hereto also the common suffrage of mankind doth in a manner agree: for although they worshipped a multitude of inferior deities, yet there was one Supreme God, Author and Governor of the rest, and of all things besides: this point enlarged on and illustrated. So much for God's *unity*.

His eternity deduced from his having made all things: also his immortality and immutability. From his making, uphold-

ing, and governing all things, it follows that *he was ever and is every where;* from his over-reaching wisdom, power, and goodness, his perfect veracity and justice proceeds. Lastly, from the excellency of his nature, from the abundance of his goodness, from his creation and preservation of all things, his rightful title to supreme dominion, &c. is inferred.

I Believe in God,

SERMON VIII.

THE BEING OF GOD PROVED FROM UNIVERSAL CONSENT.

PSALM XIX.—VERSES 3. 4.

There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard: their line (or rather, according to the LXX,* their voice) is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

THE psalmist doth in this place observe and affirm (very plainly) the universality of religion; that all nations did conspire in acknowleging a divinity, and ascribing thereto the framing and conservation of the heavens. He supposes the heavens to speak an universal language, heard and understood by all people, therein glorifying God and declaring him their Maker.

On which supposition I purpose now to ground an argument, to prove (that which formerly by several other kinds of discourse I have endeavored to evince) that great fundamental truth concerning the existence of God, that is, of one incomprehensibly excellent Being, the Maker and Governor of all things.

The argument (to be short) is that (as Lactantius speaks†) universal and unanimous testimony of people and nations, through all courses of time, who (otherwise differing in lan-

* Who read קולם instead of קום. † Lact. i. 2.

guage, custom, and conceit) only have agreed in this one matter of opinion. This testimony, in itself simply taken, hath indeed (according to the rules of reason and judgments of wise men) no small force; but seems to have much greater, if we consider the source, whatever that could be, whence it was derived. As to the thing absolutely taken, Aristotle thus ranks the degrees of probability: what seems true to some wise men is somewhat probable; what seems to the most or to all wise men, is very probable; what most men, both wise and unwise, assent unto, doth still more resemble truth; but what men generally consent in hath the highest probability, and approaches near to demonstrable truth; so near, that it may pass for ridiculous arrogance and self-conceitedness, or for intolerable obstinacy and perverseness, to deny it. 'A man,' saith the philosopher, 'may assume what seems true to the wise, if it do not contradict the common opinion of men;'* no man's wisdom (he supposes) sufficient to balance the general authority of men. Indeed, when extravagant wits, and pretenders to wisdom, (or to an extraordinary reach in knowlege,) shall assert things evidently repugnant to sense or reason; that snow and coal have the like appearance, (as did Anaxagoras;) that all motion is impossible, (as Zeno;) that contradictory propositions may be consistent, (as Heraclitus;) we may add to those instances, that all things in nature proceeded from chance, (as Epicurus and his followers;) what other means have we, (since no principles can be more evident than such propositions as they reject) to confute them, or to decide the cause, than making appeal to the common sentiments of mankind? which if they decline, what have we more to do than to laugh at or pity them? however, surely, he needs to have a very strong and very clear reason to show, who dares to withstand the common suffrage of mankind, and to challenge all the world of mistake. Now somewhat to enforce this discourse; but more to evidence the matter of fact on which it is grounded, and withal to make good that confirmation thereof, which was intimated; I shall allege some few testimonies of ancient philosophers, (that is, of witnesses in this cause most impartial and unsuspected,) se-

* Top. i. 8.

lected out of innumerable others extant and obvious, serving the same purpose: 'We are wont to attribute much,' saith Seneca, 'to what all men presume; it is an argument with us of truth, that any thing seems true to all; as that there be gods we hence collect, for that all men have engrafted in them an opinion concerning gods; neither is there any nation so void of laws, or good manners, that it doth not believe there are some gods;'* so doth he assert the matter of fact, and argue from it. The like doth Cicero in many places, sometimes in the person of his dialogists, sometimes according to his own sense; pressing this argument as very weighty. 'This,' saith he, in his Tusculan Questions, 'seems a most firm thing, which is alleged, why we should believe gods to be, because no nation is so fierce, no man so wild, whose mind an opinion concerning gods hath not imbued; many think amiss concerning gods, for that uses to proceed from bad custom, but all do however conceive a Divine power and nature to exist—Now in all things the consent of all nations is to be supposed a law of nature.'† We shall have other occasion to cite divers places out of Plato and Aristotle, confirming the same thing; I shall now only add these pregnant words of Maximus Tyrius: 'In such a quarrelling, and tumult, and jangling, (about other matters of opinion,) you may see this one by common accord acknowleged law and speech, that there is one God, the King and Father of all; and many gods, children of God, and ruling together with him: this the Greek says, and this the Barbarian says; the inhabiter of the continent, and the islander; the wise and the unwise do say the same.'‡

Thus it appears, by testimony abundantly sufficient, (to which also all histories ancient and modern do agree,) that our conclusion hath been the catholic and current doctrine of all times and of all places; so that who denies assent thereto, is beyond measure paradoxical, and belongs to a sect very thin and weak; is in opinion what a monster is in nature, a thing

* Sen. Epist. cxvii. vid. de Benef. iv. 4.

† Tusc. i. p. 299. Vid. de Nat. Deor. i. pag. 22. et ii. pag. 53. 57, &c.

‡ Diss. i. p. 5.

extraordinary and uncouth; as a lion without courage, an ox without horns, a bird without wings, (as the philosopher speaks;) a thing which seldom haps to be, and that never without some great error or defect.*

But if, as surely he will, our haughty adversary shall refute the verdict of this grand jury, we may assert its authority, not only as competent in itself, but as more considerable in respect to the causes whence it proceeded, or from the manner by which this general consent can be conceived to have been produced and propagated among men. That men should thus conspire in opinion must needs proceed either, 1. from hence, that such an opinion was by way of natural light or instinct (as the first most evident principles of science are conceived to be, or as the most effectual propensions toward good are) implanted in man's nature; thus Cicero and other philosophers suppose it to have come: in him it is thus said, and argued: 'Since not by any institution, or custom, or law, this opinion is established, and among all, without exception, a firm consent doth abide, it is necessary there should be gods; we having implanted, or rather inbred notions concerning them; but about whatever men naturally do agree, that must needs be true: we must therefore confess there are gods.'† Thus doth he draw this opinion from original light of nature. Or, 2. it may come from a common inclination in man's soul naturally disposing every man to entertain this opinion, whenever it is propounded, as there is in our eyes a natural readiness to perceive the light, whenever it shines before us; thus others explain the rise thereof, as Julian particularly: 'We all,' saith he, 'without being taught, (without any painful or long instruction,) are persuaded that a divinity exists; and to regard it, and to have, we may suppose, a speedy tendency (or recourse) thereto; being in such manner disposed thereto in our souls, as things endued with the faculty of seeing are to the light:'‡ the same similitude is, as I remember, used by Plato to the same purpose. Or, 3. it may come hence, that some very prevalent reason (obvious to all

* Diss. i. p. 16 Ælian. Var. ii. 31.
† De Nat. Deor. i. pag. 22. vid. ii. de Nat. Deor. 53. 57, &c.
‡ Jul. ad Heraclitum.

men, even to the most rude and barbarous, and flowing from common principles or notions of truth) did beget this agreement in them: thus Plutarch* derives it from men's common observations of the stars' constant order and motion; so St. Paul also seems to imply the knowlege of God manifest to all men from the creation of the world, and the works of God visible therein; and here (in this 19th Psalm) the prophet may seem to intend the same, although it be not certain he does; for that general acknowlegement and glorifying of God as maker of the heavens, which he avouches, may be understood as well the consequence as the cause of this religious opinion. Or, 4, it might from some common fountain of instruction (from one ancient master, or one primitive tradition) be conveyed, as from one common head or source, into many particular conduits. Thus the author of the book *de Mundo* (dedicated to Alexander) seems to deduce it: 'It is an ancient saying,' says he, 'and running in the race of all men, that from God all things, and by God all things were constituted, and do consist.'† The like Aristotle‡ himself implies in a notable place, which we shall afterward have occasion to produce.

No other way beside one of these can we (following experience or reason) imagine, by which any opinion or practice should prevail generally among men, who otherwise are so apt to differ and assent in judgment about things. And be it any one or more of these ways that this opinion became so universally instilled into men's minds, our argument will thereby gain weight and force: if we assign or acknowlege any of the two first ways, we do in effect yield the question; and grant it unreasonable to deny our conclusion: if nature forcibly drives men, or strongly draws men into this persuasion, (nature, which always we find in her notions and in her instincts very sincere and faithful, not only to ourselves, but to all other creatures,) how vain an extravagancy will it then be to oppose it? also, if we grant that plain reason, apparent to the generality of men, hath moved them to consent herein, do we not therefore, by dissenting from it, renounce common sense, and confess ourselves unreasonable? but if we say that it did arise in the last

* Plut. de Plac. i. 6. † Cap. 6. ‡ Metaph. xii. 8.

manner, from a common instruction or primitive tradition, (as indeed, to my seeming, from that chiefly, assisted by good reason, it most probably did arise,) we shall thereby be driven to inquire, who that common master, or the author of such tradition was; of any such we find no name recorded, (as we do of them, who have by plausible reasons or artifices drawn whole nations and sects of people to a belief of their doctrine;) we find no time when, no place where, no manner how it began to grow or spread, as in other cases hath been wont to appear; what then can we otherwise reasonably deem, than that the first deliverers and teachers thereof were none other than the first parents of mankind itself, who, as they could not be ignorant of their own original, so could not but take care by ordinary education to convey the knowlege thereof to their children; whence it must needs insensibly spread itself over all posterities of men, being sucked in with their milk, being taught them together with their first rudiments of speech? Thus doth that consideration lead us to another, very advantageous to our purpose; that mankind hath proceeded from one common stock of one man or a few men gathered together; which doth on a double score confirm our assertion: first, as proving the generations of men had a beginning; secondly, as affording us their most weighty authority for the doctrine we assert. For, 1. supposing mankind had a beginning on this earth, whence could it proceed but from such a Being as we assert? who but such an one (so wise, powerful and good) could or would form these bodies of ours so full of wonderful artifice? who should infuse those divine endowments (not only of life and sense, but) of understanding and reason? Aristotle,* discoursing about the generation of animals, says, 'If man (or any other perfect animal) were γηγενης, he must be necessarily produced, either as out of a worm, or as from an egg;' but is it not ridiculous to suppose him to arise in either of those manners? did we, did ever any one in any age observe any such production of a man? yet, why if once it could be, should it not happen sometime, yea often again, in some part of the earth, in so many thousand years? what peculiar lucky temper of slime can we

* De Gener. Anim. iii. cap. ult.

imagine to have been then, which not at sometime afterward, not somewhere should appear again? Experience sufficiently declares, that more is required to so noble a production, that men no otherwise come into the world, than either from another man, (fitted in a manner curious above our conception with many organs most exquisitely suited to that purpose,) or immediately from a cause incomprehensibly great and wise. And could we without fondness conceive man's body possibly might arise (like mice, as Diodorus Siculus tells us, out of the mud of Nilus) from earth and water fermented together, and organised by the sun's heat; yet (as more largely we have discoursed at another time) we cannot however well suppose his soul, that principle of operations so excellent, (so much different from, so far elevated above all material motions,) to spring up from dirty stuff, however baked or boiled by heat. I ask also, (supposing still this notion derived from the first men,) 2. who instilled even this notion into them? why they should conceive themselves to come from God, if they did not find it so; if he that made them, did not sensibly discover himself to them, and show them, that to him they owed their being? In short, if they did testify and teach their posterity, that they came from God, we can have no reason to disbelieve them; nor can imagine more credible witnesses, or more reasonable instructors than themselves concerning their own original: it is a discourse, this, which we find even in Plato: 'We must,' saith he, 'yield credence to them, who first avouched themselves the offspring of God, and did sure clearly know their own progenitors; it is indeed impossible to distrust the children of the gods, although otherwise speaking without plausible or necessary demonstrations; but, following law, we must believe them, as testifying about matters peculiarly belonging to themselves.'[a]

Thus do these two notions, that of general tradition concerning God, and that concerning man's origin on earth from one stock, mutually support and defend each other. And indeed, concerning the latter, there be divers other arguments of the same kind, although perhaps hardly any so clear and valid,

[a] Tim. p. 1053.

confirming it; I mean divers common opinions, stories, and practices, of an unaccountable rise, which cannot be well deemed to have been introduced, and so universally diffused among men, otherwise than from this fountain. I think it worth the while to propound some instances thereof, of each kind.

*Even this opinion or story itself, concerning mankind proceeding from one single or very narrow stock, was commonly received, and that from this head of tradition; as also divers other concerning the nature and state of man. That God did form man and breathe his soul into him, (as Aratus says, that 'we are God's offspring,' and as Cicero speaks, that 'we have our souls drawn and dropped from the Divine nature,'†) might be shown by innumerable testimonies to have been a general opinion; which although it have a very strong foundation in reason, yet it seems rather to have obtained by virtue of tradition.

That man was formed after the image of God,‡ and doth much resemble him, was also a general opinion, as Aristotle himself observes; and Ovid most expressly, according to what he found set down in ancient stories.

That man's soul is immortal, and destined to a future state of life, in joy or pain respectively, according to his merits or demerits in this life; that there should accordingly pass severe scrutinies and judgments after death on the actions of this life; that there were places provided of rest and pleasure for good men, of horror and misery for bad men departed; were opinions that did commonly possess men's minds; none of them, it seems, on the force of any arguments having a common influence on men's minds, (such as philosophers did by speculation invent, being indeed too subtile for vulgar capacities to apprehend, and scarce able to persuade themselves,) but rather from their education, continued through all times, and commencing from that head we speak of; as even such philosophers themselves confess: 'We must,' says Plato, 'believe the reports of this kind, (speaking about these matters,) being so many and so

* Vid. Clem. Alex. Str. v. p. 401. † Cic. Divin. 1.

‡ Ἀνθρωποειδεῖς θεούς, &c.—Metaph. xii. 8.

very ancient :'* and, 'We suppose,' saith Cicero, 'that souls abide after death from the consent of all nations.'† And, 'I cannot,' saith he again, 'assent unto those who have lately begun to discourse, that souls do perish together with bodies, and that all things are blotted out by death: the authority of the ancients doth more prevail with me.'‡ And, 'When,' saith Seneca, 'we dispute concerning the eternity of souls, the consent of men either fearing or worshipping the Inferi (that is, the state of things after death) hath no slight moment with us.'§ Even Celsus himself (an Epicurean philosopher, and great enemy of our faith) confesses that 'divine men had delivered it, that happy souls should enjoy a happy life hereafter.'‖

The opinion concerning man having sometimes been in a better state, (both in regard to complexion of mind and outward accommodations of life,) but that he did by his wilful miscarriages fall thence into this wretched condition of proneness to sin, and subjection to sorrow, was an ancient doctrine, (if we take Plato's word;) and concerning it Cicero hath these remarkable words: 'From which errors and miseries of human life we may,' saith he, 'conclude that sometime those ancient prophets, or interpreters of the Divine mind in the delivery of holy mysteries, who have said that we are born to undergo punishments for the faults committed in a former life, may seem to have understood somewhat.'¶—(It is true, these authors assign this fall to the souls of singular persons in a state of preexistence; but it is plain enough how easy it might be so to mistake and transform the story.) To the same head may be referred that current story concerning the golden age, in which men first did live so happily without care and pain; which so livelily expresses man's condition in Paradise. As also thereto may belong that relation concerning man's being thrown into this miserable state, because of a rapine committed against God's will, and that by the means of a woman sent down; who 'with her hands opened the lid of a great vessel, (fraught with mischiefs,) and thence dispersed sad disasters and sorrows

* Plat. de Leg. 2. Vid. Gorg. sub fin. † Cic. Tusc. 1.
‡ In Læl. § Sen. Ep. 117. ‖ Celsus apud Orig. pag. 350.
¶ Cic. Fragm. pag. 79.

among men ;' as Hesiod expresseth it, in words very applicable to the fact of our mother Eve, and t e event following it.*

I do not know also whether what Plato† says concerning man's being at first ἀνδρόγυνος, (of both sexes,) and being afterward cleaved into two, was borrowed from tradition, or devised from his own fancy ; it surely well comports with the sacred history concerning woman being taken out of man. That there are two prime causes or principles, one of good things, the other of bad, was the ancient doctrine among all the ancient nations ; of the Persians, (who called one of them Oromasdes, the other Arimanius ;) of the Egyptians, (who had their Osiris and Typhon ;) of the Chaldeans, (who had their good and bad planets ;) of the Greeks, (who had their good and bad demon, their Ζεὺς and Ἅδης ;) we have reported by Plutarch in his tract *de Iside et Osiride*, by Laertius in his Proœme, and others, (*Aug. de Civ. Dei*, v. 21.) which conceits seem derived from the ancient traditions concerning God the author of all good, and *Sathan* the tempter to all evil, and the minister of divine vengeance ; (Plutarch expressly says the good principle was called God, the bad one, Dæmon.) Indeed there were many other relations concerning matters of fact, or pieces of ancient story, agreeing with the sacred writings, which did among the ancient people pass commonly, although somewhat disguised by alterations incident from time and other causes ; which seem best derivable from this common fountain : such as that concerning the sons of God and heroes dwelling on the earth ; concerning men of old time exceeding those of following times in length of life, in stature, in strength of body, whereof in ancient poets there is so much mention ; concerning men's conspiring in rebellion against God, affecting and attempting to climb heaven ; concerning mankind being overwhelmed and destroyed by an universal deluge, and that by divine justice, because of cruelty and oppression (with other enormous vices) generally reigning :

> —Qua terra patet, fera regnat Erinnys,
> In facinus jurasse putes : dent ocyus omnes
> Quas meruere pati (sic stat sententia) pœnas.

* Sen. Ep. 90.

> —— χείρεσσι πίθου μέγα πῶμ' ἀφελοῦσα
> Ἐσκέδασ', ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρά.—Hes. Ἔργ.

† In Phædr.

'All over the earth fierce rage doth reign; you would take them to have sworn to do mischief; let them all immediately undergo the pains which they have deserved; this is my resolution:' so God, in Ovid's style, declared the reason why he decreed to bring that sore calamity on mankind; I might add that prophecy, commonly known, that this world shall finally perish by a general conflagration.

These opinions and stories chiefly concern man; there were divers others concerning God and religion, sprouting probably from the same root. That divine goodness was the pure motive of God's making the world, seems to have been a tradition; implied by their saying, that 'Love was the first, and the chief of the God's:'* πρώτιστον μὲν ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων, said Parmenides; and, Ἠδ' Ἔρος, ὃς πάντεσσι μεταπρέπει ἀθανάτοισι, said Hesiod. That God made the world out of a chaos, or confused heap of matter; which is so plainly expressed in Hesiod, in Ovid, and in other ancient writers. That God did make or beget inferior insensible powers, (of great understanding and ability; whom they called gods, and the children of the sovereign God;†) whom God immediately did converse with, and in royal manner did govern; whom he did employ as spies and agents in providential administrations of human affairs; who did frequently appear unto, and familiarly converse with men; who do walk up and down the earth, observing men's actions; secretly assisting and comforting good men, restraining and crossing and punishing the bad; whereof we have so many instances in Homer, in Hesiod, and in other ancient writers; showing as to those matters the general conceits of the old world. That God's especial presence and residence was above, in heaven, Aristotle expressly tells us was the belief of all men: 'All men,' saith he, 'have an opinion concerning gods, and all men assign the highest place to the gods, both Greeks and Barbarians.‡

That God's providence did extend itself to all particularities of affairs; and that all things were ordered by him; he constantly exercising both benignity and justice suitably to the deserts and needs of men; encouraging and assisting; blessing and rewarding virtuous and pious men; relieving the distressed

* Arist. Metaph. i. 4. † Arist. Pol. i. 1. ‡ De Cœlo, i. 3.

and helpless; controlling and chastising such as were outrageously unjust or impious. That God at seasons used to declare his mind to men (his approbation or displeasure in regard to their doings) by accidents preternatural or prodigious; did presignify future events; did impart foreknowlege of them in several ways; by dreams, by visions, by inspirations, &c. To these opinions were answerable divers common practices: invocating divine help in need; consulting God by oracle in case of ignorance or doubt; deprecating divine vengeance; making acknowlegements to God in hymns and praises; returning oblations for benefits received, both common and special; expiating guilt, and appeasing God's wrath by purgations and by sacrifices, (a practice peculiarly unlikely to proceed from any other reason than institution;) fortifying testimonies and promises by oath, or appeal to divine knowlege and justice; invoking (on condition) God's judgments on themselves or others, what is called cursing; appointing priests for God's service, and yielding them extraordinary respect; consecrating temples and altars; making vows, and dedicating gifts; celebrating festivals; paying tithes (that very determinate part) of the fruits of the earth, of the spoils in war, of the gains in trade, by way of acknowlegement and thankfulness to the Donor and Disposer of all things: in which, and the like opinions and performances, (which it would be a long business particularly to insist on,) men's general concurrence doth fairly argue, that their religion did peculiarly result from one simple institution common to mankind.

To these we might adjoin divers civil customs, wherein most nations did, from this cause probably, conspire: for instance, their counting by decades, or stopping at ten in their numerical computations; which Aristotle says, all men, both Barbarians and Grecks, did use, noting, that so common an agreement could not arise from chance, but from nature; but it is much more plausible to assign its rise to tradition. Their having every where anciently the same number of letters, and the same names (or little varied) of them. Their dividing time into weeks, (or systems of seven days;) of which practice to have been general, there be many plain testimonies. Their beginning the νυχθήμερον (or account of the daily revolution

of the heavens) from the night, grounded probably on the report that night did precede day; as Hesiod phraseth it, that 'night did beget day.'* Their general abhorrence of incestuous copulations; of which there is indeed some ground in nature, but none, I suppose, so very clear or discernible, as might serve alone to produce such a consent; yea, perhaps, if one consider it, the whole business concerning matrimony will seem drawn from the head we discourse of. Their great care of funerals, and decently interring the dead; which Cicero indeed deduces as a consequence on their belief of the soul's immortality. In fine, the consent of the old world in all moral notions of moment doth (to my sense) much imply the same thing; which notions although natural reason well used might suggest to all men, yet men, it seems, were never so generally disposed to reason well, as thereby alone to discern and approve unanimously the same truths; especially truths of this nature; which many men are apt to dislike, (as repugnant to their desires,) and consequently not ready to believe; which yet might easily by education be infused into their minds, and by virtue of the prejudice thereby begot, (assisted by plausible reason and popular consent,) be preserved and rooted in them.

Now these (with divers more, perhaps, which they who are curiously inquisitive might observe) common persuasions (whether concerning matters of universal truth, or of particular facts) and those common usages having little or nothing of foundation apparent in man's nature, or in the clear reason of the thing, no prevailing appetite or inclination of man's soul prompting to them, no occasion commonly incident to human affairs being apt to suggest them, (at least divers of them; there being indeed rather an aptitude in men to disapprove and resist them, as cross to their dispositions,) we cannot reasonably deduce them from any other cause than such as we have assigned, men's being, as St. Paul speaks, 'made of one blood,' and receiving, as their nature, so their principles of opinion and practice from the same common parents.

To confirm which discourse, and to prevent farther objections against it, we may consider, that however perhaps among some

* Νυκτὸς δ' αὖτ' αἰθήρ τε καὶ ἡμέρη ἐξεγένοντο.—Hesiod. Theog.

very barbarous nations this principal tradition (together with others mentioned, attending thereon) may have been almost worn out by time and men's stupid negligence; that however also among some people, affecting semblances of singular wisdom, as among the Greeks, the matter thereof might fall under question, and some might doubt thereof, others contradict and deny it; yet most ancient histories (particularly that of Moses, far most ancient of all, and therefore, even secluding its special and more sacred authority, of all most credible) do attest them to have been, in substance, universally received, running with a strong and clear current among the eastern people, (the Chaldeans, Phœnicians, and Egyptians;) who that they were the most ancient inhabiters of the earth, from whom the rest of mankind was propagated, the antiquity of empires among them, the first use of letters, the rise of arts, the greater progress in all kinds of civil culture, (which things argue a longer continuance in one place and state,) beside express records of story and visible monuments of things performed among them, do sufficiently declare; whose consent therefore doth in reason, so far as serves our purpose, involve the consent of all mankind; and doth confirm those notions to have flowed from the clear spring of our first parents their instruction.

It is also true, I must confess, that these original traditions, (concerning the being and providence of God,) as must necessarily happen not only by the malice of evil spirits, but from man's natural infirmity and proneness to change, even to the worse, (as also from men's aptness to mistake, from rude ignorance, from wantonness of fancy, from craftiness in promoting designs of ambition and covetousness by introducing novelties, and from such like causes,) did soon begin to be adulterated by many corrupt mixtures, did by degrees degenerate exceedingly into various shapes of superstition, falsehood, and futility. Yet even so was Judaism depraved by the Scribes; and Christianity itself hath been strangely debased by a long course of ignorant and bad times; yet who can doubt but both these were derived from one pure instruction; that of Moses, this of Christ our Lord? That it might so fare with the primitive traditions of religion is evident; that it really did so, we have even the judgment and assertion of Aristotle himself, in those

remarkable words of his to this purpose: 'There were,' saith he, 'things conveyed traditionally by the primitive and ancient men, and left in a fabulous dress to their posterity; that there are these gods, and that Divinity maintains (or encompasses) all nature: but other things were to these fictitiously superinduced for persuasion of the vulgar sort, and for the use of laws and public commodity: hence they speak of the gods, as having a human shape, or resembling other living creatures, and other things consequent on, or agreeable to, these sayings; from which things if we separate that only which was first delivered, that they deemed the gods the first beings, we may suppose what they said divinely spoken. And it is according to probability, all art and philosophy being, as might possibly, often invented and lost again, that even these opinions of them have as relics been preserved until now: the opinion then of our fathers, and that which came from the first men, is only thus far manifest to us.'

Thus did the philosopher, with a sagacity worthy so great a man, discern, that through that coarser ore, consisting in great part of dross and feculency, (taken from the fondness or fraud of human invention, or from diabolical suggestion,) a pure vein of truth did run, drawn from the source of primitive tradition; from which being supposed, we do infer, what he acknowleges divinely said, that there doth exist one first being or substance, incomprehensibly excellent in all perfection. The like observations and judgments might be produced out of divers other wise men, (Plato, Cicero, and the like,) who acknowlege and urge this common tradition as a good argument of the truths we maintain, as to the substance of them; yet scruple not to dissent from and to reprehend the vulgar errors and bad customs which had crept in and became annexed to them. But let thus much suffice for this whole argument; being the last of those I intend to use for the proof of that fundamental point, which is the root of all religion and piety.

I have produced several arguments to that purpose, (or rather several kinds of argument, each containing many subordinate ones,) most proper, I conceive, and apt to have a general effi-

* Arist. Metaphys. xii. 8.

cacy on men's minds, in begetting and confirming a belief thereof. Each of them have indeed, to my seeming, even singly taken, a force irresistible; and the greatest in its kind, that any such conclusion, not immediately apparent to sense, is capable of. The existence of any one cause in natural philosophy, is not there demonstrable by effects in any proportion so many or various, so conspicuous or certain. No question can be determined by an authority so ample and comprehensive, so express and peremptory. No doctrine can to its confirmation allege so general, so constant, so uniform a tradition. No matter of fact can be assured by testimonies so many in number, so various in kind, so weighty in quality, as those, on which this conclusion doth stand. And if we join together all these, in themselves so considerable and powerful forces, how can we be able to resist them? how can we dare to doubt of that, which they conspire to infer? When, I say, to the universal harmony of nature the common voice of nations doth yield its consent; when with the ordinary course of things, so many extraordinary accidents do concur in vote; when that which so many reasons prove, continual tradition also teaches; what can the result be, but firm persuasion in every wise and honest heart of the proposition so confirmed? except we can suppose, that, by a fatal conspiracy, all the appearances in nature, and all the generations of men; the highest reason, and the greatest authority imaginable, have combined to deceive us.

In the precedent discourses I have endeavored to prove the existence of God, by arguments, which do indeed more immediately evince those three principal attributes, wisdom, power, and goodness incomprehensible, but which also consequentially declare all other the attributes commonly esteemed ingredients of that notion, which answers to the name of God; (absolutely put, and without any adjunct limiting and diminishing it;) all those attributes, which Aristotle's definition, 'The eternal most excellent living thing;'* or that of Tertullian, 'The supreme great thing;'† do include or imply; namely, his unity first; then his eternity and indefectibility; his immense omnipresence, his spirituality; his justice and veracity; his Sovereign Ma-

* Arist. Metaph. xii. 7. † Tert. adv. Marc. i. 3.

jesty and authority; with the like connected to those, (for I cannot prosecute all the Divine perfections, according to that multiplicity of distinction, which our manner of conceit and expression is wont to assign.)

The uniformity, concord, and perfect harmony which appears in the constitution and conservation of things; their conspiring to one end, their continuing in the same order and course, do plainly declare the unity of God; even as the lasting peace of a commonwealth (composed of persons different in affections and humor) argues one law, that regulates and contains them; as the orderly march of an army shows it managed by one conduct; as the uniformity of a house, or of a town, declares it contrived by one architect.

And hereto also the common suffrage of mankind doth in a manner agree: for, however that they worshipped a multitude of inferior deities, yet that there was one Supreme God, Author and Governor of the rest, and of all things beside, transcending in power and wisdom, and all kind of perfection, was evidently the common opinion; whom therefore we see the poets (the best interpreters of the popular opinions) do style the Father of gods and men; the King of the gods; the most high, most great, most excellent, &c. 'The greater popularity,' as Tertullian speaks, 'of mankind, even when idolatry obscured the sense of Divine providence, did however appropriate the name of God especially to one, in their usual expressions; being wont to say, If God grant; and, What pleases God; and, I commend it to God.'* And if the vulgar had in some measure this conceit, the wiser sort appear to have had more clear and full apprehensions and persuasions concerning it: Plato refers the making of the world to one whom he calls πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν (the Father and Maker of the universe.) Aristotle, when he hath occasion to speak of God, doth usually speak in the singular; so do other philosophers, as the Stoics, in their famous precept *Deum sequi*, (to follow God, that is, to acquiese in, or submit to, Divine providence,) sometime they do expressly signify this to be their opinion: 'There are many popular gods,' said Antisthenes, 'but one natural one:' εἷς δὲ ὢν πολυωνυμός ἐστι;

* Tertull. adv. Marc. i. 10.

'Being really one,' saith the author *de Mundo*, 'he hath many names; according to the several affections he discovers, and the operations he exerts:' with whom Seneca thus agrees: 'So often as you please, you may diversely name the Author of things: there may be so many appellations of him, as there be gifts or offices and operations; him our people fancy to be father Bacchus, and Hercules, and Mercury; call him also Nature, Fate, Fortune: all these are but names of the same God, variously using his power.'* If they ever speak of gods plurally, they are to be understood to speak with the like opinion of them, as we of angels, that is, of invisible, intelligent powers, created by the supreme God, dependent of him, subject to him;† Mars. Ficinus's caution concerning Plato being applicable to the rest:—*sed ne turbet quæso Deorum numerus, quem non turbat numerus angelorum. Nihil enim plus apud Platonem tot possunt Dii, quam apud nos tot angeli, totque beati.* So much for God's unity.

As to his eternity: if God made all things, he could not receive being from another; and he who made this world, what reason can there be to suppose him to be from another? Nor can any thing receive a being from itself, or from mere nothing spring up into being; therefore the Maker of the world must be eternal. Something of necessity must be eternal, otherwise nothing could have been at all; other things show themselves to have proceeded from the wisdom, power, and goodness of One; whence that One is eternal; and so all nations have consented that God is.

That he is immortal and immutable doth also follow plainly: for he not depending for his being, or any thing thereto belonging, on any other thing, neither can he depend for his continuance or conservation; having power superior to all things, as having conferred on them whatever of power they have, nothing can oppose him, or make any prevalent impression on him, so as to destroy or alter any thing in him.

Also, from his making, his upholding, his governing all

* Sen. de Benef. iv. 7.

† See that most remarkable saying of Sophocles, (apud Grot. in Excerpt. pag. 149.) εἷς ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν, εἷς ἐστιν θεὸς, &c.—Mars. Fic. in Arg. lib. x. de Leg.

things, is consequent, that he was ever and is every where: where his power is, there his hand is; for every action with effect requires a conjunction of the agent and patient; nothing can act on what is distant. That with his presence and power he doth penetrate all things, operating insensibly and imperceptibly, doth argue the spirituality of his being; and that he doth not consist of such matter (so extended, so divisible) as those things do, which we by sense perceive.

His overreaching wisdom implies him uncapable of being deceived; and his overbearing power signifies that he doth not need to deceive; and his transcendent goodness proves him unwilling to deceive: the like we may say of doing wrong; whence are consequent his perfect veracity and justice.

Lastly, the excellency of his nature, the eminency of his wisdom and power, the abundance of his goodness; as also, his having given being, then preserving it to all things, do infer his rightful title to supreme dominion; and accordingly, that all love, all obedience, all praise and veneration are due to him; according to the devout acknowlegement of those blessed elders: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and honor and power, (or authority,) because thou hast made all things; and for thy will they are and were created.'

SUMMARY OF SERMON IX.

JOHN, CHAP. V.—VERSE 17.

WHEN at first by the divine power this visible system of things was consummated, it is said that *God rested from all his work which he had made.* Meaning of this rest explained: it does not extend to an Epicurean indolence; but his wisdom is constantly displayed in his superintending care and goodness, &c.; particularly in his command and control over nature, in the suspension of his own laws, and the performance of marvellous actions, to excite our minds towards him. That this is the case we learn from the words of truth itself in the text; whose affirmation it is intended to second with particular instances well attested: these distributed into two classes; those which are above or against the power of nature, and those which surmount or cross the stream of human affairs.

The first kind considered; of which it may be generally affirmed, that no man can deny many such to have been performed, without giving the lie to the most authentic records of history, and disparaging the credit of mankind, &c.

To this kind may be referred the presignification and prediction of future events: this head enlarged on and illustrated by examples from profane and sacred history.

But especially works usually styled *miraculous*, which exceed or contravene the ordinary course or power of nature, and which therefore all men refer to an agent exceeding their

comprehension in power or knowlege: such described: their reality vindicated.

Consideration of other extraordinary events, as apparitions from another world; spirits; visions; the power of enchantments, &c. The truth of some of these asserted and distinguished from the falsity of others; which truth, inferring the existence of powers invisible, if it be admitted, may confer much to the belief of that supreme Deity, which these discourses strive to maintain.

The objections of those who argue from the impossibility of the existence of such things, answered. The folly of those, who think it a mark of wisdom to be very incredulous, exposed.

The second sort of extraordinary events touched on; such as are observable in the transaction of human affairs, and surpassing the common efficacy of human causes; by which God, as it were, in a louder tone declares his presence and providence.

1. Slender instruments raised up to overthrow long established iniquity, &c. Examples given.

2. Examples of consummate justice or vengeance on remarkable sinners.

3. Similar ones on ambitious conquerors.

4. The generally lamentable end of great tyrants and oppressors.

5. The judgments of God on persons and families raised to wealth and splendor by oppression, fraud, and rapine, &c.

6. The detection of murders and other enormous crimes done in secret.

7. The like strange discoveries of plots against the commonweal and lives of princes, &c.

8. The remarkable providences that occur in the recompense and encouragement of virtue, the protection of good men from dangers, &c. Such considerations as the above, taken singly,

have not the greatest force and evidence; nor can they be so strongly insisted on as the arguments drawn from the course of nature: reasons for this stated at large.

But however general providence may work in convincing some, particular providence will at least produce that effect in many: reasons for this alleged. Conclusion.

I Believe in God,

SERMON IX.

THE BEING OF GOD PROVED FROM SUPERNATURAL EFFECTS.

JOHN, CHAP. V.—VERSE 17.

But Jesus answered them, My Father hitherto worketh, and I work.

WHEN at first by the divine power this visible system of things was consummated and settled in that course wherein it now stands, it is said that 'God rested from all his work which he had made:' the plain meaning of which saying is, that God so framed all the parts of nature, and several kinds of things, and disposed them into such an order, and inserted into them such principles of action, that thereafter (without more than an ordinary conservation or concourse from him) things generally should continue in their being, station, and course, without any great change, for ever; that is, for so long as God had determined, or till their due period was run through: ('He established them,' as the psalmist speaks, 'for ever and ever; he made a decree, that shall not pass: His word was settled in the heavens, and his faithfulness unto all generations: they continue this day according to his ordinances:' 'He made a covenant with day and night, and appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth:') thus God rested and ceased from his work of creation. But it is not said, nor intended, that God did absolutely give over or forbear working; that he withdrew his care, and tied up, as it were, his own hands by a resolution not to intermeddle more with any thing,

but to enjoy a kind of Epicurean ease and ἀπραξία. No: his wisdom hath so ordered things, that there should be need and reason of his acting continually; that there should be frequent occasion of variously displaying his glorious attributes; of exercising his power, of demonstrating his goodness. Indeed, as to beings merely natural and unintelligent, there were no need of his doing more; for they are all thoroughly his obedient servants, and exactly fulfil his word; never straggling from the station in which he placed them; never transgressing the rule that he prescribed them: but he hath also made other beings, by nature uncapable of such uniformity and settlement; very free, and therefore very mutable; to the well governing of whom therefore a continual intention and activity is requisite. For the use and benefit of which beings, as a great part of nature was designed and made by God, so it was not unmeet, that for their sake he should sometime alter the course of nature, and cross or check the stream of things. The fuller and clearer illustration of his glory, the showing that all things do not pass on in a fatal track; the confirming that he made nature, because he can command and control it; the demonstration of his especial care over and love toward men, in suspending or thwarting his own established laws and decrees, as it were, for their sake; the exciting men the more to mind God, and impressing on them a respect toward him; the begetting faith in him, and hope in his providence, are fair accounts, for which God sometimes should perform (even in a manner notorious and remarkable to us) actions extraordinary. And that God doeth so, we learn in the words I read from the mouth of truth itself; whose affirmation (for persuading the incredulous) I intend to second with particular instances, attested to by reasonable proof, suitable to the nature of the matter; and this with design to infer from such operations (as effects assignable to no other cause) the existence of God; having endeavored formerly to deduce the same from the common ordinary works, appearing in both worlds, natural and human. And as we before distinguished the ordinary works or actions, so here we shall distinguish the extraordinary ones, into two sorts; into those which are above or against the course (or power) of nature; and those, which surmount or cross the

stream of human affairs; such as being evidenced and granted to have been really performed, either all men will believe, or the wisest men will readily confess the being of such a cause as we assert.

I. Let us first consider the first kind: and of these we may generally affirm, that no man can deny many such to have been performed, without giving the lie to the most authentic records of history that are or have been extant; without extremely disparaging the credit of mankind; without impeaching all nations and all ages not only of extreme weakness, (in credulous assent unto, regarding and relying on, such appearances; which not only the vulgar sort, but even princes and statesmen, learned men and philosophers, every where have done,) but of notorious baseness and dishonesty, in devising and reporting them; without indeed derogating utterly from all testimony that can be rendered to any matter of fact, and rendering it wholly insignificant; for that if we may disbelieve these reports, there is no reason we should believe any thing that is told us.

To this kind we may refer the presignification and prediction of future events, especially those which are contingent, and depend on man's free choice; to the doing of which nothing is more evident in itself, nor more acknowleged by all, than that a power or wisdom supernatural is required; concerning which we have the (not despicable) consent of all times, continued down from the remotest antiquity, that frequently they have been made: 'There is,' saith Cicero, 'an ancient opinion, drawn even from the heroical times,' (that is, from the utmost bounds of time spoken of,) 'that there is among men a certain divination, which the Greeks call prophecy,' (or inspiration,) 'that is, a presension and knowlege of future things.'* And of this kind even profane story doth afford many instances; there indeed having scarce happened any considerable revolution in state, or action in war, whereof we do not find mentioned in history some presignification or prediction;† whereof though many were indeed dark and ambiguous, or captious and fallacious, yet some were very clear and express, (according as God was

* De Div. † Idem.

in his wisdom pleased to use the ministry of those spirits, which immediately conveyed them, in directing men for their good, or misguiding them for their deserved punishment;) such as were for instance, that concerning Cyrus's conquering the Lydians; that concerning the battle at Salamis; that concerning the battle of Leuctres; and divers others which occur in stories composed by wise men of the wisest nations; even the life of one man, (good Socrates,) described by excellent persons his most intimate acquaintance, (Xenophon and Plato,) affords divers; and Cicero acquaints us that Chrysippus did collect (and it is great pity his collection hath perished) an innumerable store of them, all confirmed by good authority and testimony.* I cannot stand to relate many of them particularly, or discuss the validity of relations concerning such instances: I shall only say, that discourse in Tully, concerning the oracle at Delphos, which may be extended to the rest of that sort, doth not seem contemptible: 'I defend,' saith he, 'this one thing; that never would that oracle have been so renowned, nor so stuffed with the gifts of all nations and kings, if every age had not experienced the truth of those oracles;'† for it is hard that a mere imposture should, to the expense and damage of so many persons, so long continue in credit. I will adjoin but one observation to this purpose, that even among those Pagans who regarded these things, it was known and acknowleged, that such portending, or predicting future things, although immediately conveyed by inferior powers, did originally proceed from the one Supreme God: so the wise poet implies, when he makes the prophetic fury say, that she received her prediction from Apollo, and Apollo from the Almighty Father;

> Accipite ergo animis, atque hæc mea figite dicta,
> Quæ Phœbo Pater omnipotens, mihi Phœbus Apollo
> Prædixit, vobis Furiarum ego maxima pando:‡

* De Div. 172.

† Defendo unum hoc, nunquam illud oraculum Delphis tam celebre, et tam clarum fuisset, neque tantis donis refertum omnium populorum atque regum, nisi omnis ætas oraculorum illorum veritatem esset experta, &c. P. 172.

‡ Æneid. 3.

where Servius notes, that even Apollo (he who among their deities was in chief esteem for rendering oracles) is 'said to derive his knowlege from Jove,' or the Sovereign God.

It seemed not amiss to touch those instances of this kind which profane story yields, but the holy Scriptures afford most evident and eminent ones; some of them extant in books written and in use long before the events foretold; as that of Abraham's concerning his posterity sojourning and being afflicted in Egypt four hundred years; of the prophet concerning Josiah, some hundred years before his birth,) that such a prince should be, and what he should do; of Isaiah concerning Cyrus by name, his conquests, his restoring the Jews from exile, his re-edifying Jerusalem; of Jeremiah concerning the captivity, and its duration for seventy years; of Daniel concerning the grand revolutions of empire in the world, (wherein the achievements of Alexander and his successors are so plainly described, that Porphyrius could not but acknowlege the consonancy of them to the events;) of our Saviour concerning the siege and destruction of Jerusalem: the truth of which reports, although we should allow those writings which contain them an authority no greater than human, there were no reason to question; since most of those writings were extant a good time before the events specified. Now if but one of these innumerable instances were true, if ever one event hath been presignified or predicted, (and it were a hard case that among so many not one should prove so,) it sufficiently evinces what we intend.

But to our purpose especially do appertain the works usually styled miraculous, which exceed or contravene the ordinary course or power of nature; which therefore all men will readily confess performable only by an agent in power or knowlege exceeding their comprehension, (such as are, for example, the fire being withheld from burning, and the waters from flowing; the sick being (without medicinal applications) cured of long chronical distempers; limbs being (in the like manner) restored to persons maimed, and senses to them who from their birth (or otherwise for a long time) had been deprived of their use; restoring the dead to life, (a thing which Pliny mentions

as impossible in his conceit to God himself,*) and the like :) of these, although all nations have had so many performed among them, as sufficed to breed every where a constant opinion that a divine power did frequently interpose, so as to control and overbear the force of nature, (which opinion could not in likelihood so generally and constantly prevail without any ground at all;) yet the holy Scriptures do most fully and clearly testify concerning them to have been in great number performed, (for the confirmation of that divine truth and will of God, which they declare him pleased to reveal; for guiding men into or setting them in right opinions or good practices; for disabusing and withdrawing them from ways of error and vice; for the encouragement and relief of good, or the restraint, discouragement, and chastisement of evil men; which in reason are the most proper causes, why by such a Being, as we suppose, (so wise, so good,) such works should be effected;) the testimonies concerning which there can be no good reason assigned of refusing, but very great to admit them, as we hope at another time satisfactorily to declare. Indeed God's patefaction of himself, his mind, his will, (in many kinds and manners particularly to the Fathers of old, and afterward generally to all the world by his Son; on purpose sent from heaven to publish and accomplish his designs of mercy and favor to all mankind,) accompanied with so many prodigious works of power, and so many glorious circumstances of providence conspicuous to all the world, and withal so accommodated as to beget first of all this assurance in us, that a divine power doth exist and preside over all affairs both natural and human, is an argument which in all honest and well-disposed minds (not possessed with false prejudices, nor depraved by vicious inclinations) cannot but obtain effect; the fuller urging and confirming of which I shall refer to another season, when it will serve a more general purpose, even the confirming not only this part, but even the whole of our religion in gross: I shall only now briefly say concerning them, that considering the works themselves, they were in number so many and various; in kind so great and high; as to the manner of performance so naked

* Nat. Hist. ii. 7.

and open, (being done in the face, and exposed to the senses of all men;) that there could be no reason to suspect any juggling or human artifice used about them: considering the witnesses that asserted them, they were persons who by their writings, by their behavior, by the effect of their endeavors, approved themselves very intelligent; in their intentions very honest and free from any sinister design, in their conversations very innocent and virtuous, in their attestation very consistent and constant; so that there could be desired no witnesses of any fact better qualified, or more credible than they: considering the design of those works, there could be none more noble and excellent, more worthy of God, more beneficial to man; it being chiefly the confirmation of a doctrine, incomparably the most reasonable and most useful that ever appeared among men; productive of the best fruits, apt (being entertained heartily) to make men highly good and truly happy; to promote the honor of God and the interests of goodness; to secure as much as can be both the public and private welfare of mankind. Considering which things, we can have no good reason to distrust the performance of such works, by authentic records, by constant tradition attested to us.

I may adjoin to the former sorts of extraordinary actions, some other sorts, the consideration of which (although not so directly and immediately) may serve our main design; those (which the general opinion of mankind hath approved, and manifold testimony hath declared frequently to happen) which concern apparitions from another world, as it were, of beings unusual; concerning spirits haunting persons and places, (these discerned by all senses, and by divers kinds of effects;) of which the old world (the ancient poets and historians) did speak so much, and of which all ages have afforded several attestations very direct and plain, and having all advantages imaginable to beget credence; concerning visions made unto persons of especial eminency and influence, (to priests and prophets;) concerning presignifications of future events by dreams; concerning the power of enchantments, implying the co-operation of invisible powers; concerning all sorts of intercourse and confederacy (formal or virtual) with bad spirits: all which things he that shall affirm to be mere fiction and delusion, must

thereby with exceeding immodesty and rudeness charge the world with extreme both vanity and malignity; many, if not all, worthy historians, of much inconsiderateness or fraud; most lawgivers, of great silliness and rashness; most judicatories, of high stupidity or cruelty; a vast number of witnesses, of the greatest malice or madness; all which have concurred to assert these matters of fact.

It is true, no question, but there have been many vain pretences, many false reports, many unjust accusations, and some undue decisions concerning these matters; that the vulgar sort is apt enough to be abused about them; that even intelligent and considerate men may at a distance in regard to some of them be imposed on; but as there would be no false gems obtruded, if there were no true ones found in nature; as no counterfeit coin would appear, were there no true one current; so neither can we well suppose that a confidence in some to feign, or a readiness in most to believe, stories of this kind could arise, or should subsist, without some real ground, or without such things having in gross somewhat of truth and reality. However, that the wiser and more refined sort of men, highest in parts and improvements both from study and experience, (indeed the flower of every commonwealth; statesmen, lawgivers, judges, and priests,) on so many occasions of great importance, after most deliberate scanning such pretences and reports, should so often suffer themselves to be deluded, to the extreme injury of particular persons concerned, to the common abusing of mankind, to the hazard of their own reputation in point of wisdom and honesty, seems nowise reasonable to conceive. In likelihood rather the whole kind of all these things, were it altogether vain and groundless, would on so frequent and so mature discussions have appeared to be so, and would consequently long since have been disowned, exploded, and thrust out of the world; for, as on this occasion it is said in Tully, 'Time wipeth out groundless conceits, but confirms that which is founded in nature, and real.'

Now if the truth and reality of these things, (all or any of them,) inferring the existence of powers invisible, at least inferior ones, though much superior to us in all sort of ability, be admitted, it will at least (as removing the chief obstacles of

incredulity) confer much to the belief of that supreme Divinity, which our discourse strives to maintain.

I must acknowlege that both these arguments, drawn from testimonies concerning matters of fact, (and indeed all other arguments,) were invalid and insignificant, could any demonstration or any argument weighty enough be brought to show the impossibility of such a thing to exist, as we infer to exist from them. But, as it is a very easy thing (so whoever is versed in speculation and reasoning about things cannot but find) to prove many things possible to be, which do not actually exist; so it is hard to prove the impossibility of a thing's being; yea there is plainly no other mean of doing this, than the manifesting an evident repugnance between being itself, and some property assigned to that thing; or between several properties attributed thereto; as if we should suppose a square circle, or a round square to exist. But in our case no man can show such a repugnance; between being and wisdom, power or goodness, there is no inconsistence surely; nor can any man evince one to be between being and coexisting with matter, or penetrating body; between being and insensibility; between being and any other property which we ascribe to God; nor is there any clashing between those properties themselves: it is therefore impossible to show that God cannot exist; and therefore it is unreasonable to disbelieve the testimonies (so many, so pregnant) that declare him to exist.

Men indeed, who affix themselves to things which their sense offers, may be indisposed to abstract their minds from such things, may be unapt to frame conceptions about any other sort of things; but to think there can be no other things than such as we see and feel, that nothing, endued with other properties than such as these objected to our sense have, can exist, implies a great dulness of apprehension, a greater shortness of reason and judgment; it is much like the simplicity of a rustic, who, because he never was above three miles from home, cannot imagine the world to reach ten miles farther; and will look on all that is told him, concerning things more distant, to be false, and forged to abuse him. I add, that these men's incredulity is hence more inexcusable, because the possibility of such a being's existence, the compatibility and concurrence of such

properties in one thing, is (as we otherwhere have largely showed) by a very plain instance declared, even by that being within every man, which in a degree partakes of all those properties.

I shall leave this head of discourse with this one remark; that they are much mistaken, who place a kind of wisdom in being very incredulous, and unwilling to assent to any testimony, how full and clear soever: for this indeed is not wisdom, but the worst kind of folly. It is folly, because it causes ignorance and mistake, with all the consequents of these; and it is very bad, as being accompanied with disingenuity, obstinacy, rudeness, uncharitableness, and the like bad dispositions; from which credulity itself, the other extreme sort of folly, is exempt. Compare we, I say, these two sorts of fools; the credulous fool, who yields his assent hastily on any slight ground; and the suspicious fool, who never will be stirred by any the strongest reason or clearest testimony; we shall find the latter in most respects the worst of the two; that his folly arises from worse causes, hath worse adjuncts, produceth worse effects. Credulity may spring from an airy complexion, or from a modest opinion of one's self; suspiciousness hath its birth from an earthy temper of body, or from self-conceit in the mind; that carries with it being civil and affable, and apt to correct an error; with this a man is intractable, unwilling to hear, stiff and incorrigible in his ignorance or mistake: that begets speed and alacrity in action; this renders a man heavy and dumpish, slow and tedious in his resolutions and in his proceedings: both include want of judgment; but this pretending to more thereof, becomes thereby more dangerous. Forward rashness, which is the same with that, may sometimes, like an acute disease, undo a man sooner; but stupid dotage, little differing from this, is (like a chronical distemper) commonly more mischievous, and always more hard to cure. In fine, were men in their other affairs, or in ordinary converse, so diffident to plain testimony, as some do seem to be in these matters concerning religion, they would soon feel great inconveniences to proceed thence; their business would stick, their conversation would be distasteful; they would be much more offensive, and no less ridiculous than the most credulous fool in

the world. While men therefore so perversely distrustful affect to seem wise, they affect really to be fools; and practice according to the worst sort of folly.

Thus have I, although very cursorily, considered the first kind of works extraordinary that appear in the world: I proceed briefly to touch the other sort, observable in the transaction of human affairs; for even in these there do happen things in a sort miraculous or prodigious; according to reasonable estimation surpassing the common efficacy of human causes; by which God in a language more express, as it were, and in a louder tone, declares his presence and providence here; so that they must be very deaf and stupid who do not from them learn lessons of piety and reverence toward God; who do not in them hear Heaven thundering forth that proclamation to us all: *Discite justitiam moniti.* For instance,

1. We may observe, when any where things are come to such a pass, that iniquity and outrage do extremely prevail, so that the most of men's lives become intolerably grievous, that in such cases often the state of things, how seemingly stable and robust soever, in a manner sudden and strange, by means to appearance small and weak, to be overturned, and reduced to a more tolerable form; no strugglings of might, no fetches of policy, no circumspection or industry of man availing to uphold it, an invisible hand checking all such force, and crossing all such devices. 'A stone cut out of the mountains without hands,' (that is, a slender instrument coming forth out of some remote or secret place, without any considerable influence of human endeavor,) 'breaking in pieces the iron, and the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold;' there being raised up instantly a Moses or a Maccabæus; an Ehud or a Gideon; a Dion or a Timoleon, by a single stroke or a sudden impression, to deliver oppressed nations from slavery.

2. How many examples do experience and history afford us of justice and vengeance, in ways for their kind and for their circumstances very remarkable, executed in the face of the world on persons (such as Corah and his fellows, Sennacherib, Herod, Brennus) notoriously wicked and mischievous, who have outbraved Heaven by their impiety, or horribly abused mankind by their injustice!

3. Yea, we may take notice that even few of those men, whose actions have been illustrious for greatness void of goodness; who have climbed to height of power and state by the ruins and slaughters of mankind; that, I say, few of such persons have departed off the stage in peace or honor. That Alexander was snapt in the flower of his age and glory; that Cæsar was no sooner arrived to the top of his fortune than to the bottom of his life; neither having time allowed them to enjoy, scarcé to taste, those fruits which they so eagerly sought and toiled for: both perhaps (one without any peradventure) being speeded away by violent and treacherous hands. Not to mention Pompey or Hannibal, or other such like men of exorbitant ambition, whose fortunes were so strangely changed, and whose ends were so dismal.

4. We may however observe that few great tyrants and oppressors, few persons insolently profane or sacrilegious, have escaped the visible stroke of divine vengeance; a stroke inflicted in ways not only violent, but shameful; and that usually by means most unexpected, by the hands of their own guards, their own servants, their own favorites, the very instruments of their mischief, and these stirred up by slight causes, by some little disgrace or disgust received by them from their master.* What a long black legend of Caligula's, Nero's, Domitian's, Commodus's, Heliogabalus's, Maximinus's, may any man's observation even out of profane histories easily compose, of whom the divine justice in such ways hath rid the world?

5. I might also mention the judgments of God on persons and families raised to wealth and splendor of estate by oppression, fraud, sacrilege, rapine, or such bad means; whose estates without any visible ordinary means do moulder and decay; a secret moth devouring them; a thing which falls under common observation.

6. The same providence hath more clearly discovered itself in the strange detections of murders, and other enormous mischiefs committed in darkness, and revealed by a light unaccountably darted from Heaven. Of which kind

* Vid. Plut. in Pelopida ad fin.

not only books, but common experience doth furnish with stories and instances very remarkable both for number and weight.

7. The like strange discoveries of plots, contrived secretly against the public peace, and against the lives of princes, frequently offer themselves in story, and the like experience suggests concerning private men: 'a bird of the air carrying the voice' of the wicked traitor to the ears of him who is designed against; 'the stones of the wall crying out' treason and murder. Yea, generally, according to the psalmist's observation, when men have 'encouraged themselves in an evil matter, and have communed about laying snares privily—saying, who shall see them?—God doth shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly they are wounded.' So that all men have reason, as he adds they will do, 'to fear, and to declare the work of God,' if they 'wisely consider his doing:' and himself had reason to pronounce in another place; 'The Lord is known by the judgment that he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.'

8. I might adjoin the remarkable providences which also occur, concerning the recompenses and encouragements of virtue; in the protecting good men from imminent dangers, delivering them from grievous straits, supplying them in extreme needs, prospering them in their undertakings, raising them (as Joseph, David, Daniel, &c.) by wonderful means to wealth and dignity, for their own encouragement, or for public benefit; concerning which occurrences the psalmist had reason to say, 'Whoso is wise will observe these things, and they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.'

These considerations, with divers others of the same kind, grounded on Providence, I must confess have not, singly taken, the greatest force and evidence to infer our purpose, nor can they with the same assurance and peremptoriness be urged to every adversary or disbeliever, as some other arguments may; those, which we have formerly insisted on, drawn from nature. For in nature, all causes there being themselves destitute of immediate reason or choice, and subject to no chance or contingency, (properly so called,) we may indeed confidently ascribe all effects, in which any reason or counsel doth appear, whether

ordinary or extraordinary, to divine efficacy; there being no other cause to which we can reasonably impute them: but in human affairs, seeing man is an understanding and free agent, and few effects happen without some act of his intervening, there can hardly occur any passage, how rare and strange soever, which our incredulous adversaries, with some kind of color or plausible shift, will not be ready to attribute unto some reach of man's wit, or to some *capricio* of his humor, or to some unaccountable casualty, incident to matters of this kind; (as we see the Philistines were apt to impute the plague of emerods to chance; the Israelites did presently charge that terrible judgment on Corah and his complices on Moses and Aaron.) And commonly divine and human influences on these effects (even as in nature the influences of Heaven and of inferior particular causes) are so complicated and interwoven together, that it is not so easy to distinguish the one from the other, either in whole or in part, to separate the bounds of providence ordinary and extraordinary, to discern what God performs by usual instruments, what by his immediate hand. As also the actions of the wisest men are often grounded on reasons remote from, and impenetrable by, vulgar conceit; so are the reasons of God's proceedings with men various and often mysterious; above the reach of our capacity with distinction to apprehend them: as who, for instance, can oftentimes readily distinguish between God's merciful patience toward bad men, and his gracious recompensing the good; between God's just vengeance on the one sort, and his fatherly correction of the other; between his reclaiming one from vice, either as particular circumstances require, by adverse or prosperous events, and his trying or exercising the other's virtue by the like proceedings? Who can distinguish between what is performed or permitted on general or on particular accounts; in respect to the public, or in regard to private men; in relation to present times, or to posterity; on absolute and immediate accounts, or in order to some farther, more remote designs? Who, I say, can pretend skill enough to define what or how much is best to be done in these cases; when it is fit to allow men to proceed in the use of their freedom, when to interrupt them? Who, but he that exactly

knows the limits of just and fit, the qualities and tempers of men, the state and circumstances of every thing?

I add, that God's governance of things hath no complete issue here; that this is not the only nor the chief place of dispensing rewards and punishments; that things are but doing here, and not done; in a progress and tendency toward somewhat beyond, not in a state of final resolution or perfection: wherefore as we cannot fully judge of an artificial work by its first draughts, nor of a poem by some scenes, but must stay till all is finished and acted through; so we cannot so clearly discern the intire wisdom and justice of Divine dispensations here; not till that day, when, as St. Paul tells us, God's δικαιοκρισία, 'his righteous judgment, shall be made apparent.' Whence discourse grounded on present events may not prove so convincing or satisfactory, except unto the children of wisdom, who by a sharper sense can discover even the smaller lines and more occult tracts of God's hand; who with an especial attention and sagacity do, as the prophet expresseth it, 'regard the works of the Lord, and consider the operations of his hands.' However, the frequent occurrences in human affairs of passages, such as we mentioned, so rare and remarkable, if they do not, singly and solitarily taken, thoroughly serve to demonstrate the hypothesis of Divine providence, yet at least they do much favor and strengthen it, being very congruous thereto. Supposing such a Providence, it is most probable (I may say necessary) that such events would happen; whence there can be no absurdity in ascribing them thereto, but much of reason in doing it. They are *digni vindice nodi*, difficulties not otherwise easily resolved, and therefore God may be most fitly introduced, as the most probable cause of them; if strict discourse cannot compel us, yet ingenuity will incline us, and wisdom will oblige us, to do so. 'They that are wise will consider these things, and they shall understand the lovingkindness (I add, and also both the wisdom and power) of the Lord.' 'A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this,' saith the psalmist, concerning the procedings of Providence.

But however general providence doth work in convincing

some, particular providence will at least produce that effect in many: for I dare appeal to most men (to those especially, who have ever had any fear of God, or sense of goodness in them,) if, sometime or other, in their lives, they have not in their pressing needs and straits (especially on their addresses to God for help) found help and comfort conveyed unto them by an insensible hand; if they have not sometimes in a manner unaccountable escaped imminent dangers; if they have not in the performance of their duty and devotion toward God experienced a comfort more than ordinary; if they cannot to some events of their life aptly apply those observations of the psalmist: 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good.' 'O taste and see;' he appeals to experience; he supposes the Divine goodness may be seen and felt; that surely will be a most efficacious argument of God's existence and providence. And so it is indeed to all good men, for whose comfort and confirmation it is chiefly mentioned, though it is not likely to have much influence on them, who have alienated themselves from God, and driven him 'out of their thoughts;' except they should (beyond what can be expected from them) be so civil and candid, as to believe the testimony of others, who assert this great truth unto them from their own inward conscience and experience.

But let thus much serve, at present, for the showing that God doth, as our Lord tells us, hitherto work; and consequently that, as we thence meant to infer, God doth exist.

SUMMARY OF SERMON X.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 6.

IT has already been proved *that there is one God.* The following parts of our creed are now proceeded in.

The Father. This term is sometimes put absolutely or singly, referring to the first person of the blessed Trinity; but commonly it is to be understood of *God* essentially considered, to whom in that respect all the divine attributes agree, &c. The accounts on which God is so called first considered: next the terms or objects in relation to which he is so called: then the consideration is applied to practice.

One God and Father of all. Every attribute, title, or relation of God, grounds an obligation, and affords an inducement to good practice and obedience; but none more than that of *Father*; which title is on several accounts commonly given to things: one of these is *causality*: another is *sustenance* or *preservation*; another *governance*, with beneficent affection and care: these briefly illustrated. On all these it is plain that the title of Universal Father may truly be ascribed unto God.

1. God is the Father of all things, or of us as creatures; being the efficient cause and creator of them all: *he made the world*, says St. Paul, *and all things therein*; &c. The title, *Pater Omnipotens*, was given to the Supreme Being by the Pagans.

2. More especially God is the Father of intellectual beings: he is styled *the Father of Spirits*; and the angels, by way of excellency, are called *the sons of God*: this topic dilated on.

3. God is, in a more especial manner, the Father of mankind: *have we not*, saith the prophet, *one Father? hath not one God created us?* Thus Adam is called *the son of God*, the genealogy of all men terminating in him: this subject enlarged on.

4. Yet farther, God is more especially the Father of all good men; such a relation being built on higher grounds and respects; for as *good* they have another origin from him; virtue springeth up from an heavenly seed; &c.

5. Moreover we may observe that God, when he particularly designs to contain men within bounds of duty, and thereby lead them to happiness, delights to represent himself under this endearing relation: this shown in the case of his ancient people.

6. But in the Christian dispensation, God more signally represents himself in this quality: all his performances towards us, and in our behalf, are of such a nature, and are set forth in such terms, as import this relation: for,

1. The reception of a believer into the privileges of Christianity is termed *υιοθεσία*, *the making him a son*; &c.

2. That renovation of our nature which the gospel requires, is called *regeneration*, *a new birth*, &c.

3. The resurrection of good Christians after death to a state of glory, is worthily styled *παλιγγενεσία*, *a being generated and born again*.

4. It might be added, that Christians do become the sons of God by the intervention of our Saviour, assuming our nature, whereby he becomes *the first-born of many brethren*; &c.

In so many respects is God our Father, and we are his children. The consideration of which has manifold good uses.

I. It in general may teach, and should remind us, what reverence and observance is due from us to God in equity, jus-

tice, and gratitude. *If I be a father, where is my honor?* Mal. i. 6.

2. It may instruct and admonish us how we should behave ourselves; for if we be God's children, it becometh us, in our disposition and demeanor, to resemble and imitate him; &c.

3. It may raise us to a just regard, esteem, and valuation of ourselves, inspire noble inclinations, and withdraw us from all base and unworthy practices.

4. It is an especial motive to humility; for if we are God's children, so as to have received our being and all things from him, what reason can we have to ascribe or assume any thing to ourselves?

5. This consideration shows us the reason we have to submit intirely to the providence of God, as being *his possessions;* &c.

6. It also obliges us to be patient and cheerful in the sorest afflictions, as coming from a paternal hand, and designed for our good.

7. It shows the reason we have to obey those precepts which enjoin us to rely on God's providence; *to cast all our burden and care on him;* as children do commonly live, without care, on the maintenance of able and kind parents, &c.

8. It doth more generally in all regards serve to breed and cherish our faith, to raise our hopes, to quicken our devotion: for in whom shall we confide, if not in such a father? from whom expect good, if not from him who has already given us so much?

9. Lastly, it will direct and prompt us how to behave ourselves towards God's creatures; who, if he be their father, are all of them in some sort our brethren: this topic enlarged on. Conclusion.

The Father,

SERMON X.

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 6.

One God and Father of all.

I HAVE formerly discoursed concerning the nature of that belief which we here profess: I did also endeavor by several arguments to evince the truth and credibility of the first article of our Creed, which is indeed the foundation of all the rest, and of all religion, 'That there is one God.' I proceed to the following parts.

'The Father.' The appellation of God not improperly taken, (as when it is attributed to creatures, on some resemblance in nature or office which they bear to the supreme God,) but relating to him who only, truly, and properly is styled God, is sometimes put absolutely, sometime hath a relative apposition going along with it. Being absolutely or singly put, it sometimes refers, by way of eminency, particularly to the first Person in the blessed and glorious Trinity; as when Christ is called the Son of God; when God is put in distinction from the other persons, (when, for instance, it is said, 'That they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' 'Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'The Word was with God.' 'To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.' And in

that form of blessing, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all;') but commonly it is to be understood for God essentially considered, (according to the Divine essence common to all three Persons,) to whom in that respect all the Divine attributes agree, and from whom all Divine operations (*absolute et ad extra*) do jointly proceed. And to this sense or notion we have hitherto supposed that the name of God might be here applied. For, that there is one God, having such essential attributes, is the first principle and foundation of all religion, which we must therefore suppose, if not directly expressed, yet at least sufficiently implied in the Creed.

And supposing the word in part doth imply this sense, the attribute or title of Father doth on many accounts truly and properly belong to God, (God absolute and essential,) in relation to all things generally, and to some things particularly; especially, which is the most fruitful consideration, in respect to ourselves.

Let us first consider the accounts on which, then the terms (or objects) in relation to which, God is so called; then let us apply the consideration to practice.

One God and Father of all.

Every attribute, every title, every relation of God doth ground an obligation, doth afford an inducement to good practice; but none other doth ground higher obligation, or yieldeth stronger inducement to all kinds of obedience, than doth this of Father, which here, and frequently otherwhere in holy Scripture, is ascribed to God: unto which purpose, of exciting us to good practice, (to all good practice generally, and particularly to some kinds thereof,) I do now intend to apply the consideration thereof: but first let us consider in what respects, or on what grounds, this title is attributed to God; then let us reflect somewhat on the term, in respect to which God is styled 'Father of all,' that is, in a larger sense of all things, in a stricter sense of all persons, in the most restrained sense of all us Christians.

The title of father is on several accounts commonly given to things; one is causality; for the efficient cause, or author of

any thing, is called its father; any work is said to be the child or offspring of him that maketh or inventeth it; 'Hath the rain a father,' (or, 'Who is father of the rain?' as the LXX render it,) 'or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?' saith God in Job: another ground thereof is sustenance, or preservation; so Job saith of himself, that 'he was a father to the poor and fatherless,' because he yielded them protection and relief; so, *Roma patrem patriæ Ciceronem libera dixit*, Rome called Cicero father, because he preserved it from the attempts of wicked conspirators against its liberty and safety: education also and instruction intitle to this name; whence St. Paul calleth Timothy and Philemon, the Corinthians and Galatians, whom he had instructed in the Christian faith, his children: lastly, governance, attended with beneficent affection and care, doth found this appellation; whence princes are usually styled the 'fathers of their country,' being supposed to desire and to provide for the public good; so we have the 'fathers of tribes,' that is, the principal persons of them, who did preside over them: I do omit antiquity and age, for which we know that persons are vulgarly called fathers.

On all these accounts it is plain that the title of Universal Father may truly be ascribed unto God; especially in respect to ourselves, who may be considered as equivalent to all other objects, as comprehending in us somewhat common to them all; God in some of those respects is the Father of all things, or of us as beings; God is more especially the Father of intelligent beings, and of us as such; God is the Father of all men, of all good men, and peculiarly of Christians; which respects all of them do or should concur in us. Let us survey those particulars somewhat distinctly, then apply them as obligations and inducements to good practice.

1. God is the Father of all things, or of us as creatures; as the efficient cause and creator of them all: 'He made the world,' as St. Paul telleth the Athenians, 'and all things therein;' 'He commanded,' saith the psalmist, 'and they were created;' 'The world and the fulness thereof,' (that is, all wherewith it is replenished, and which it contains,) 'he hath founded them;' 'All these things,' saith God in the prophet, 'hath mine hand made:' and ποιητὴν, καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς, 'the

Maker and Father of this universe,' even Plato styleth God. God is also the Father of all things, because he preserveth and sustaineth them by his power; 'He,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'beareth up all things by the word of his power;' 'He,' saith the psalmist, 'hath established them for ever and ever; he made a decree which shall not pass,' by virtue of which they subsist: also because he by a continual care doth provide for them; 'They all,' saith the psalmist, 'wait on him, that he may give them their meat in due season; what he giveth them, they gather; he openeth his hand, they are filled with good:' he also governeth, and containeth them in good order; for, 'his kingdom ruleth over all;' and, 'whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doeth he in heaven and earth:' all this he doeth with goodness and affection; for, 'his tender mercies are over all his works:' whence even among Pagans the word *Pater* absolutely put, did signify the Supreme God, they understanding thereby the Author, Preserver, and Governor of all things; and *Pater omnipotens* is the periphrasis, whereby the wisest poet doth usually express God.

2. More especially God is the Father of intellectual beings; he is styled 'the Father of spirits:' particularly the angels in way of excellency are called the sons of God: 'There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord:' and, 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;' in which place of Job the LXX. have ἄγγελοί μου, 'my angels;' (although perhaps there all God's creatures may be understood rejoicing and exulting, as it were, in their being, newly by the goodness of their Maker conferred on them:) again, 'Who,' saith the psalmist, 'in heaven can be compared unto the Lord?' 'who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?' the sons of the mighty; it is in the Hebrew, 'the sons of God,' and so the LXX. render it; and what precedeth, 'who in heaven,' doth make it, as it seems, best interpretable of the angels. Of such beings God is more especially the Father, because he did produce them in a more excellent manner; for other things he made as it were by his hand, these he breathed out of his mouth; as it is said of Adam, when God infused his soul into his body, that 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath

of life;' because they more nearly resemble God in their nature and properties, (in spirituality, and independence on matter; in life, and self-moving; in immortality, and perpetuity of being; in understanding, and wisdom; in will, and goodness; or in a capacity at least of such perfections;) because also he ruleth them in a nobler way; a way, not of blind and constrained obedience, but of wise and free choice, according to laws of justice, by obligations of ingenuity; because he likewise beareth a more dear affection unto them, and a peculiar care over them: in respect to these beings indeed the relation of father is more proper, because they only can be sensible thereof, and capable to render the duties of piety, gratitude, and willing obedience suitable thereto; 'Rational beings,' saith an Ethnic philosopher, 'are the sons of God, because they only are naturally fit to converse with God, being conjoined to him by participation of reason:'* and thus indeed even the Pagan theologers, commonly from primitive general tradition we may suppose, did conceive the Supreme God to be the Father of the gods, (intending not such gods as were of man's devising, creatures deified by the flattery or fondness of the vulgar, but of higher rank, answering to our angels, whom they supposed as to approach in excellency of nature nearest to God, so to have derived their being from him, and to attend constantly on him, partaking of his glory, and observing his pleasure;) whence *Divûm pater*, 'Father of the gods,' is a common periphrasis, or title of God among them; and particularly in the Timæus of Plato there is an oration, which he representeth God making unto those creatures presently on their creation, beginning thus; 'O ye chief gods, of whom I am the Framer and Father;' concerning which gods that which he can say, he pretendeth to deduce from ancient original tradition. But to come nearer to our more particular concernment.

3. God is the Father, in a more especial manner, of mankind: 'Have we not,' saith the prophet, 'one Father? hath not one God created us?' and Adam is called 'the son of God,' the genealogy of all men terminating in him; and, 'We are all

* Arr. Epict. i. 9.

God's offspring,' saith St. Paul: we are so, for that 'his hands made and fashioned our bodies;' and for that he 'formed our spirit within us,' as the prophet speaketh. He made us after his own image, so as signally to represent and resemble himself, in properties of nature, and in eminence of condition; in this great family of visible creatures he hath assigned unto us the principal station, so that other creatures there are but as servants waiting on us; we are as children, depending only on him; he hath showed an especial tenderness of affection and good-will toward us, in providing for us all manner of needful sustenance and comfortable accommodation; continually watching over us for our good, and 'holding us up,' as the psalmist speaketh, 'from our mother's womb;' bestowing on us good education, (instructing us by the light of nature, or dictates of natural reason and conscience, by civil conversation, by the precepts of wise men, and examples of virtuous persons, by providential encouragements to good, and determents from evil; together with the secret whispers, advices, and motions of his grace;) bearing with excessive patience our infirmities, miscarriages, and offences; using seasonable and moderate chastisements to reclaim us from bad courses to those which our duty and our advantage do require: in short, all God's dealings and demeanor toward mankind do argue in him a paternal regard thereto: whence even the blind Heathens discerned and acknowleged this general relation of God to men; and, *Gentis humanæ Pater, atque custos*, ('O father, and keeper of mankind!') was an invocation suitable to their notion concerning him: from him they deduced our original; to him they ascribed the formation of our bodies, so full of wonderful artifice; from him they affirm our souls to be extracted; from his goodness and care they supposed all the conveniences of life which we enjoy to be derived; they conceived him to bear a kind affection unto man, and to have a constant care over him; as by many express testimonies might be showed, and from their practices evidently may be inferred.

4. Farther, yet more especially God is the Father of all good

* Hor. Carm. i. 12. Epict. i. 3. 9.

men; such a relation being yet built on higher grounds and respects; for as good they have another original from him; virtue springeth in their hearts from a heavenly seed; that emendation and perfection of nature is produced by his grace enlightening and quickening them; they are images of him, resembling him in judgment and disposition of mind, in will and purpose, in action and behavior; the which resemblances do argue them to be the sons of God, and indeed do constitute them such; for, 'Love your enemies,' saith our Lord, 'bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you—that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven;' and 'Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing thence; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the sons of the Most High.' Imitation of God in goodness and beneficence doth, we see, found a filial relation unto God: to such, God answerably doth bear a paternal kindness and compassion; for, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so,' saith the psalmist, 'the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' He in all respects dealeth with them as with his children; ὡς υἱοῖς προσφέρεται, as the Apostle to the Hebrews speaketh: he teacheth and guideth them with wholesome advice on all occasions; for, 'What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose;' and, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord:' he gently removeth and correcteth them; 'Whom,' saith the wise man, 'God loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth:' he maintaineth them with all needful sustenance and accommodation without their care or trouble; for, 'Take no care,' saith our Saviour, 'saying, 'What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?—for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;' he so knoweth and considereth it, as to provide, that 'there shall not be,' as the psalmist affirmeth, 'any want unto them that fear him:' he protecteth them from all danger, supporteth them in all distress, and rescueth them from all mischief; for, 'His eyes are open on the righteous—to deliver his soul from death, and to keep him alive in famine; he keepeth all his bones, so that none of them is broken—though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his

hand; many are his afflictions, but the Lord delivereth him out of all.' Such paternal affections doth God bear, such paternal acts doth he exercise, toward good men; the which even Pagan wise men did apprehend; of whom one thus expresseth himself; 'God,' saith he, 'hath a fatherly mind toward good men, and strongly loveth them—between them and God there is a friendship which virtue doth conciliate; a friendship, do I say? yea, a kindred and similitude; for that a good man is God's disciple and imitator, and his true offspring, whom that magnificent Father, no softly exacter of virtue, doth, after the manner of severe parents, educate hardly.'*

5. We may farther observe, that God in his proceedings with men, whereby he particularly designeth to contain them within bounds of duty, and thereby to lead them unto happiness, delighteth to represent himself under this obliging and endearing relation: thus he did in regard to his ancient people on all occasions express himself: 'Who are Israelites, whose is the adoption?' saith St. Paul, reckoning this as the first of those privileges which appertain to the Jews; it was the commission to Moses; 'Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me:' Moses also, foreseeing how that people would misbehave themselves, doth thus in God's name expostulate with them: 'Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy Father that bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?' 'Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee:' David also thus addresseth himself to God in their behalf; 'Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever; thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty:' and, 'Doubtless,' saith Isaiah, 'thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowlege us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting:' and, 'I am,' saith God in Jeremiah, 'a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn;' 'Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child?' *He is*, the LXX. render it, in way of assertion, not of interrogation.

* Sen. de Provid. 1. 2.

6. But in the Christian dispensation God more signally representeth himself in this quality and notion. God herein treateth us, not so much as our Lord and Master, with imperious rigor and awfulness, as our Father, with most gracious condescension, and allurements of kindness: 'Our Lord (the only Son of God in a sense infinitely most peculiar and high) was not,' saith the Apostle, 'ashamed to call us brethren;' 'Go,' said our Lord, for instance of that gracious condescension, 'to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father; both my God, and your God:' and such are the advantages peculiar to Christians, grounding this relation toward them, that St. Paul, comparing our state in regard to God with that of the Jews, doth thus infer; 'So that thou (O Christian) art not now a servant, but a son:' so it is asserted, and accordingly (which is worth our while distinctly to observe) all the performances of God toward us, and in our behalf, are of such a nature, and are set out in such terms, as do ground and import this relation: for,

1. The reception of a believer into the participation of the privileges and advantages which Christianity tendereth, is termed *υἱοθεσία*, the making him a son; the adopting him into God's family, the conferring on him the title and quality of God's child; together with the internal disposition of mind, and the liberty of access and intercourse, which do suit that relation: 'Whosoever,' saith St. John, 'did receive him, to them he gave the power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them who believed in his name:' and, 'Ye are all,' saith St. Paul, 'the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus;' that is, by sincerely embracing Christianity: and, 'Behold,' saith St. John again, 'what manner of love the Father hath given us, that we should be called the sons of God:' and, 'Ye have not received the spirit of servitude unto fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father:' that is, by which in our prayers with humble affection we freely, confidently, and readily, according to our Saviour's institution, do say, 'Our Father.'

2. That renovation of our nature, and qualifying our minds, as the Gospel prescribeth and requireth, is called regeneration,

a new creation, a new birth, the begetting a new man within us: 'If a man be not born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' that is, he cannot be a good Christian: 'Whoever is begot of God doth not sin;' that is, good Christians do not live in a course of disobedience: 'We are αὐτοῦ ποίημα, God's work,' or production, 'being created in Christ Jesus to good works:' 'Ye have been taught—to put on the new man, that is created according to the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.' In such terms is the effect of the Christian dispensation on our hearts and lives described; and that with the greatest reason; for no act of God toward us can be more fatherly, than working in us by his grace the principles of Christian life, and the practices springing from it; nothing doth nearer advance us to a similitude with God, and a 'participation of the Divine nature;' nothing doth conciliate from God a more tender affection to us, or worketh in us a more dutiful affection toward him, answerable to this relation, than doth a hearty compliance with the grace of the Gospel.

3. The resurrection of good Christians after death to a better state of life, their entering into immortal bliss and glory, is worthily styled παλιγγενεσία, a being generated and born again; whereby they receive from God another more excellent life and state of being, more like and conformable to God: for, 'We know,' saith St. John, 'that if he shall appear, (or, that when he shall appear, as some copies read it,) we shall be like him;' and, 'As,' saith St. Paul, 'we have borne the image of the earthly (Adam,) we shall also bear the image of the heavenly:' 'We shall,' saith he, 'be metamorphosed,' or transfigured 'into the same image:' and, 'They,' saith our Saviour, 'which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead—are the sons of God, being the sons of the resurrection:' that state of bliss is therefore styled a portion or inheritance, allotted to sons, and consequent on such a relation: 'If sons,' saith St. Paul, 'then heirs; heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ, receiving the reward and promise of an eternal inheritance:' 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' saith St. Peter, 'who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resur-

rection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.'

4. I might adjoin, that Christian men do become the sons of God by the intervention of our Saviour, assuming our nature, and conforming himself to the likeness of men; whereby he becomes 'the firstborn of many brethren:' 'God,' saith St. Paul, 'sent forth his son, born of a woman, that we might receive the privilege of being made sons:' and, 'Children,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'partake of flesh and blood;' whence (as he meaneth to infer) our Lord being the Son of God, we on conjunction of nature with him, and as his brethren, become also such: he farther intimateth, that on this score we do surpass angels themselves; for that 'he took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham:' they were not, as we, dignified with a fraternal relation to the Son of God.

In so many several respects is God our Father; we are his children, as being his creatures, made, preserved, and maintained by him; as we are intellectual creatures, being placed in degree and quality of nature so near him; as we by virtue and goodness (produced in us by his grace) do anywise approach him, resemble him, and partake of his special favor; as we are Christians, adopted into his heavenly family, renewed by his holy grace, and destinated to a participation of his eternal glory.

Now the consideration of these grounds, (each one of them, and all of them together,) on which this relation of God unto us is founded, hath manifold good uses; it is apt to inform and admonish us concerning many necessary duties resulting from it; and to enforce on us the practice of them.

1. It in general may teach, and should mind us, what reverence, honor, and observance is due from us unto God, in equity and justice, according to ingenuity and gratitude: 'If,' saith God in the Prophet, 'I be a Father, where is my honor?' Our believing and acknowleging this relation is vain, if we do not yield the respects, and perform the duties answerable thereto. And if indeed we are obliged to love, to respect, to observe those, who have been the instruments of God in pro-

ducing, in nourishing, in breeding us, how much more are we bound to yield the same to him, who principally did, who continually doth, bestow on us our being, together with all the supports, the conveniences, the comforts thereof; from whose free bounty we derive not only the benefits of this transitory life, but the inestimable privileges and blessings relating to the future incomparably better state? If we neglect our duty so grounded, may not God justly expostulate with us, as he did of old with those children of his: 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise:' 'Is he not thy Father, who bought thee?' (or rather, who got thee, *ὃς ἐκτήσατό σε*, saith the Greek; and both that and the Hebrew do agree in expression of that thing with our common manner of speech;) 'hath not he made thee, and established thee?' It is, as is there intimated, a part of extreme folly, no less than of injustice and ingratitude, to disregard and disobey him, to whom by such bands of duty and obligation we are allied: indeed the excellency of God's nature doth justly require honor and reverence to him; his sovereign power may also reasonably extort obedience from us; but his paternal benevolence and beneficence are the most obliging grounds, the most kindly inducements, to the practice of all piety toward him: we are foolishly unworthy in not being good on the other accounts; in not being so for these reasons we are monstrously base.

2. This consideration may instruct and admonish us what we should be, and how we should behave ourselves; for that, if we be God's children, it becometh us, and we are obliged, in our disposition and demeanor, to resemble, to imitate him: it is natural and proper for children to resemble their parents in their complexion and countenance; to imitate them in their actions and carriage: 'If ye,' argueth our Lord, 'were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham;' ye would imitate him in readily believing and obeying God: and, 'Ye,' saith he again, 'are of your father the Devil, because ye perform the lusts of your father:' because in his envious, treacherous, murderous disposition and practice, ye resemble him: so if we be God's children, we must, according to St. Paul's exhortation, 'imitate God, as dear children;' we must, in all imitable perfections, strive to be like him; so doth the Scrip-

ture frequently (both in general, and as to particular cases or matters) apply and inculcate this point: God is holy and pure, so therefore ought we to be; 'As obedient children,' saith St. Peter, 'not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;' and, 'That,' saith St. Paul, 'ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, (or irreprehensible sons of God,) in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;' and, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God,' saith St. John, subjoining—and every one that hath this hope (a hope grounded on, or springing from, such a relation) purifieth himself, as God is pure:' God is perfectly just and righteous, thence we likewise should labor to be such; for, 'Every one,' saith St. John, 'that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous:' God is perfect in all goodness; so must we endeavor to be, as our Saviour enjoineth us; 'Be ye,' saith he, 'therefore perfect, as your Father is perfect:' God is bountiful, gracious, and merciful unto all; we thence should learn to be so also; 'I say unto you, (they are our Saviour's lessons to us,) Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;' and again; 'Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil; be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.' So are we admonished by the holy writers of our engagements to be good on this account. And reason indeed showeth this relation to be inconsistent with our being otherwise; for similitude only can preserve cognation; things very unlike become formally different in kind and nature thereby; diversity of manners signify a difference in blood: if therefore we be closely affixed to material things, or pronely addicted to brutish pleasures, how can we be the children of him, that is purely spiritual, altogether intellectual? If we be fierce, hardhearted, unmerciful, or uncharitable, how can we

claim kindred with him, who is all love and benignity, all munificence and mercy? there can be no affinity in relation, where there is such a dissimilitude in nature: God also cannot deal with us as children, cannot affect or like us, if we do not resemble him; he can only love good men, and the most certain κριτήριον (the most perfect rule, the most evident mark) by which we can discern or distinguish what goodness is, is conformity to God's nature, discovered by his actions; for that cannot otherwise than be very good, wise and reasonable, comely and commendable, convenient and beneficial to us, wherein we resemble God; God's example cannot misguide us, his law and his practice ever consent, his will and nature cannot disagree; nothing therefore can more please him than what is like him; as even Plato could observe: 'What practice,' saith he, 'is acceptable and suitable to God? One; even that, which the old saying implies, Like is ever a friend to like.'* Nothing likewise is more certainly bad, or more displeasing to God, than that which rendereth us in our complexion of mind, or in our behavior, unlike to God: we by being such, or doing so, must necessarily fall from this high dignity, must *ipso facto* forfeit this excellent privilege of being thus related to God; we thereby become exiles and aliens from his name and family; we prove rebels and foes, instead of sons and friends, unto him.

3. This consideration may raise us to a just regard, esteem, and valuation of ourselves; may consequently inspire noble thoughts, and breed generous inclinations in us; may withdraw us from mean, base, and unworthy designs or practices; may excite and encourage us to handsome, brave, worthy resolutions and undertakings, suitable to the dignity of our nature, the nobleness of our descent, the eminency of so high a relation, of so near an alliance to God: even natural light dictateth this use of the notion, and heathen philosophers do apply it: 'If any one,' saith Epictetus, 'could be affected with this opinion, that we are all originally descended from God, and that God is both the Father of men and gods, he would not, I suppose, conceive any thing ignoble or mean concerning himself; If Cæsar should

* Plato de Leg. 4.

adopt thee, none could endure thy superciliousness; and if thou knowest that thou art God's son, shall it not elevate thy mind?' So that great philosopher discourseth. And St. Austin relateth this discourse of Varro, the most learned Roman of his time: 'It is,' said he, 'useful for cities, that valiant men should (although it be false) believe themselves born of the gods, that their minds thence bearing a confidence of their divine extraction, may more boldly undertake great enterprises, pursue them more earnestly, and hence accomplish them more happily, from the security this conceit produceth.' Shall we then, who in so many respects are so highly born, and of so illustrious an extraction, (we that are allied to God by our intelligent nature, that are by the heavenly seed of Christian regeneration more deeply implanted into his stock,) so far debase ourselves as to affect and pursue trivial, abject, dishonorable things? Are we not ashamed of so vile a degeneracy? Can we dare so to disparage our high relations? God our heavenly Father; Christ our elder Brother; the holy angels and blessed saints, our kindred in nature, our brethren in grace? Shall we not be afraid for such unworthiness to be degraded, to be rejected, to be disinherited by our holy Father; who is jealous of his honor, who cannot brook to have his blood so stained and defiled, or that such blots and disgraces should stick to his lineage; that his image impressed on us should be so deformed and disfigured; that such disorders and misbehaviors should be committed in his family? If we do not behave ourselves as children, he hath declared that he will disavow and cast us off from being so; 'Every plant,' our Saviour telleth us, 'that beareth not good fruit, he loppeth it from his stock, and casteth it away.'

4. This consideration is an especial motive to humility, apt to depress vain conceit and confidence in ourselves: for, if we are God's children, so as to have received our beings, all our powers and abilities, all our goods and wealth, both internal and external, both natural and spiritual, from his free disposal, so as to be continually preserved and maintained by his providence, to depend for all our subsistence on his care and bounty; what

* De Civ. D. iii. 4.

reason can we have to assume or ascribe any thing to ourselves? How vain is it to rely on any strength or wisdom, any possession or endowment we have, or seem to have? How extremely fond are we if we be raised in our conceit, or are ambitious of reputation, on the score of any such things? for, 'Who,' as the Apostle invincibly discourseth, 'made thee to differ? what hast thou that thou didst not receive? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' To him alone, who is the Author and Donor of all good things; to the Fountain of all power, all joy, all blessings; to 'the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth;' all praise and glory is due.

5. This consideration showeth us the reason we have to submit intirely to the providence of God, with contentedness and acquiescence in every condition; for seeing we are God's possessions, (*Θεοῦ κτήματα*, as Plato calleth us,) he having made us whatever we are, according to all accounts and capacities, whether as men by his common providence, or as Christians by his especial grace; he surely hath the best right and title that can be on us; he may justly dispose of us and use us as he *thinks* good; we may well thence be obliged, according to the apostolical precept, 'to glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's;' if we repine at or complain of God's dealing with us, may he not justly return to us that answer in the gospel, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' Shall we not suffer God to order his own family according to his discretion and pleasure; to assign what station, to allow what portion he pleaseth to his own children, without our offence or displeasure? Shall we pretend to know better than he what is fit to be done? shall we claim a right to dispense his goods, or desire to be carvers for ourselves? If it be unjust and unreasonable to do thus, then in all reason we ought to be content in every state that he disposeth us into, and to undergo patiently whatever he imposeth on us; yea we have reason to be more than content with every thing incident, not only as justly proceeding from him, but as presumable to be good and convenient for us; for is it not fit that we should think that God will order things for the best good of his own children? Can we conceive that he willingly will hurt, or will not rather help them; that

he will design them any mischief, yea that he will easily suffer it? 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may,' God telleth us, 'forget; yet he will not forget us:' sooner indeed may the most tender parents become unnaturally regardless, spiteful, and cruel toward their children, than the immutable God (who in his nature is unexpressibly benign and compassionate) shall neglect the good of his offspring: good reason therefore have we to be satisfied with all that befalleth us.

6. Particularly this consideration obligeth us to be patient and cheerful in the sorest afflictions, as deeming them to come from a paternal hand, inflicted with great affection and compassion, designed for, and tending to, our good: 'Thou shalt,' saith God to the Israelites, 'consider in thy heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee:' and, 'We,' saith the Apostle, 'have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of of his holiness.' The punishments inflicted on us by men may perhaps proceed from passion; but God assuredly never inflicts any thing grievous on us, but out of pure good-will: and what sweeter consolation can there be, than to know that the most cross and distasteful accidents befalling us do (according to the intention of him that bringeth them on us, and manageth them) conduce to our profit, and shall in the event, if we do patiently receive them, and by our untowardness do not hinder their effect, prove wholesome and advantageous to us?

7. This consideration doth also show the reason we have to obey those precepts, which injoin us to rely on God's providence; 'to cast all our burden and care on God;' to be solicitous and anxious about nothing which concerneth our sustenance: for children commonly (especially such as have able and kind parents) do live altogether void of care concerning their maintenance, being assured that their parents will concern themselves to provide whatever is necessary or convenient for them: and how much more have we reason to live free of soli-

citude in such respects, who have a Father so infinitely sufficient to supply all our wants, and so tenderly affected toward us; so ever present with us, and always vigilant over us; who cannot but see and know our needs; and can most easily satisfy them, and is no less willing and ready, if we trust in him, to do it? 'Do not,' saith our Lord, 'take care, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?—for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' The like reason did even natural light suggest to a philosopher:* 'If,' saith he, 'kindred with Cæsar, or with any other great man in Rome, is sufficient to make a man live securely, without contempt, and without fear, will not the having God our Maker and Father and Guardian, free us from griefs and fears?' It is extreme infidelity concerning either the providence of God, or his power, or his goodness, (that is, the practical disbelief of this point, or in our hearts disavowing God to be our Father,) which causeth all that carking and distraction of mind, that fear of wants, that grief for losses and disappointments, which do commonly possess men, together with those covetous desires and unjust practices, with which the world aboundeth: he can hardly be guilty of them, who believeth and considereth that God doth thus stand related and affected toward him.

8. This consideration doth more generally in all regards serve to breed and cherish our faith, to raise our hope, to quicken our devotion: for whom shall we confide in, if not in such a Father? from whom can we expect good, if not from him who hath already given us so much, even all that we have? to whom can we have recourse freely and cheerfully, on any occasion, if not to him, who so kindly inviteth and calleth us to him, in so endearing terms, with so obliging an appellation? If we in any need, corporal or spiritual, request succor or supply from him, can we suspect that such a Father (so infinitely wise, so able, so good) will refuse us, or can fail us? No; 'What man is there of us, that if his son ask him bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If we then, who are evil, know how to give good

* Epict. Arr. i. 9.

gifts to our children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' So doth our Saviour with most convincing force of reason move us to the duty of prayer, with faith and confidence of good success. St. Luke hath it, 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' implying that, on account of this relation, we may in all our spiritual needs (if we do need light and direction in our doubts, or strength against temptations, or comfort in our distresses) be assured of finding requisite assistance and relief. We should therefore, on all exigencies, address ourselves to God, not with the fear of slaves, nor with the suspicion of strangers, but with dispositions of heart suitable to children, with a reverent love, and humble confidence, and cheerful hope.

9. Lastly, considering this point will direct and prompt us how to behave ourselves towards all God's creatures, according to their respective natures and capacities: if God be the father of all things, they are all thence in some sort our brethren, and so may claim from us a fraternal affection and demeanor answerable thereto. Shall we then scorn, abuse, trample or tyrannise over any of them? doth it become us to do so? will our common Father like it, or endure it? If we are all branches sprouting from one stock, or streams issuing from the same source of divine beneficence and fecundity; if we are members of one body, of one commonwealth, of one family, we are then surely obliged to an universal benevolence; to be kind and compassionate, to be helpful and beneficial unto all, so far as our capacity reacheth; we are to endeavor, as we can, to preserve the order and promote the welfare of the world, and of all things in it: even on this score the meanest of God's creatures is not to be despised, the vilest worm is not to be misused by us; since even it is the work of his hands, and the subject of his care, yea the object of his kindness, 'who,' as the psalmist telleth us, 'is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works:' but especially toward those beings, who according to a more peculiar and excellent sense are intitled the sons of our Father, and to whom we are more nearly allied by our better part, (that divine breath, which both they and we drew from God,) toward all intellectual

beings, we do learn hence our respective duties: of love and respect toward those our elder brethren, the angels, (those of them, which have not degenerated from their nature, and apostatised from their duty;) of charity and good-will toward each other; which if we do not maintain, we may consider that we thereby are first undutiful and unkind to God our common Father, and then even to ourselves; we do hate and harm both God's relations and our own (God's children, and our brethren) by hating or harming any man whatever; especially any good man, any Christian brother; who by other more peculiar bands is straitly tied to us; who on so many better and higher accounts standeth related unto God, and to ourselves. Aristotle saith, that all men, on grounds of natural cognation and similitude, are naturally friends to one another; much more are all good men so by participation of a more excellent nature, and by a nobler resemblance; whence it is St. Paul's precept to Christians, that they should be τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ, εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, that they should 'bear a natural affection each to other in brotherly love:' Christians are in a more peculiar and eminent manner styled brethren; and that charity, which in respect to others is called philanthropy, (or humanity,) in regard to them is named philadelphy, (or brotherly affection:) hence to perform all fraternal offices toward every Christian, to wish heartily and earnestly to promote his good, to compassionate and, as we are able, to relieve his evils, to bear his infirmities, and to comport with unkindnesses from him, and the like duties, are incumbent on us, as peculiar to our profession.

These are the principal uses which the consideration of this point suggesteth. Now God Almighty, the great Father of all things, and especially our gracious Father in Christ Jesus, grant that by his holy grace we may perform all filial duty toward him, (rendering unto him all love and reverence, all praise and thanks, all worship and obedience, together with all faith and hope in him,) that we may behave ourselves in all things as becometh this relation, that we may resemble him in all goodness, that we may persist here continually in his favor, and obtain hereafter the blessed inheritance from him; this he of infinite mercy vouchsafe unto us,

through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom for ever be all glory and praise. Amen.

'Even to God the Father, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, the Author and Donor of all good; to God the Son, the Redeemer of all the world, and foundation of all spiritual blessings; to God the Holy Ghost, the fountain of all true goodness, joy, and comfort, be for ever and ever all glory and praise.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XI.

REVELATIONS, CHAP. XI.—VERSE 17.

EVERY attribute of God is a proper and useful object of our consideration, as being apt to remind us of our duty, and excite us to the practice of it; for which purposes this of *omnipotence*, mentioned in the text, is of much avail, and deserves serious consideration: some reasons for this assigned. Explanation of the title or attribute παντοκράτωρ, which we render *Almighty* or omnipotent, as frequently ascribed to God in a peculiar and characteristical manner: the use of it in the New Testament is by citation or imitation transferred from the Greek of the Old Testament, where it serves to express those two famous and usual names of God, *Sabaoth* and *Shaddai*: it is shown especially to answer to the former, which primitively seems to import God's universal conduct and management of all creatures.

But the sense of the word need not be so limited; for its common latitude hath been authenticated in the holy fountains of truth, the New Testament; and is there taken to signify the sum of divine perfections and pre-eminency: it may accordingly denote, 1. right or authority over all beings: 2. power to do all things: 3. the actual exercise of such authority and power in ruling all things: 4. the possession of all things: 5. the preservation or upholding all things: these particulars are next surveyed.

1. God is παντοκράτωρ, as having a just right and authority over all things, being naturally the sovereign Lord and Emperor of the world; this shown to have been the opinion of

Pagan philosophers, as well as of the Prophets and Christian Apostles; &c.

2. He is also such in regard to his infinite power, as that word may signify omnipotent: this head enlarged on and illustrated from Scripture.

3. He is also so, because he doth actually exercise all dominion, and continually exert his power, according to his good pleasure; for *the Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven, and his kingdom ruleth over all;* &c. This dilated on.

4. God is παντοκράτωρ, as the true proprietary and just possessor of all things: *the heavens,* saith the Psalmist, *are thine; the earth also is thine;* &c.

5. Also as containing and comprehending all things by his immense presence and infinite capacity. *I fill heaven and earth,* saith God in Jeremiah; and king Solomon in his prayer observes, *the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee;* &c.

6. Lastly, God is παντοκράτωρ, in regard that he sustains and preserves all things: see Nehemiah ix. 6. Col. i. 17. &c.

The belief and consideration of these particulars are of great importance, and may have a very useful influence on our practice: for,

I. If God be the just Sovereign of all things, having a right to govern the world, and actually exercising it; then

1. We see our condition here; that we live not in an anarchy, or in perfect liberty to follow our own will, &c. 2. We understand our duty, as subjects and vassals, &c. 3. We may hence discern the heinousness of every sin, as committed against the crown and dignity of God. 4. We may learn what reason we have to be content in every condition, since our station is allotted to us by unquestionable right, &c. 5. It is matter of great consolation to reflect that we and all the world are under such a governor, who is no usurper and tyrant, but a most just, wise, and gracious sovereign, &c.: this point dilated on.

II. The belief of God's immense and uncontrollable power is also of great importance and influence on practice. 1. It serves to beget in us a due awe and dread of him; &c. 2. It consequently dissuades and deters us in a high manner from sin, nothing being more reasonable than that advice of the preacher, *contend not with him that is mightier than thou.* 3. Whence the consideration of this point may dispose us to weigh well our counsels, &c. 4. It may also serve to depress confidence in ourselves, and in all other things, as to any security they can afford: 5. it therefore may be of special efficacy to quell and mortify in us the vices of pride, arrogance, self-will, &c. 6. Also to breed and nourish faith in God, as to the certain performance of his word and promises, which, be they never so difficult, he is so able to perform, &c. 7. Hence also particularly it may produce and cherish faith in the sufficiency of God's Providence, and induce us intirely to rely on it: this topic enlarged on. 8. Farther, it affords comfort and encouragement to us in the undertaking and prosecution of honest and prudent enterprises, giving us hope and confidence in their success: this head also enlarged on.

III. That notion of the word *Almighty*, which implies God's being universal proprietary and possessor of all things, has also many good uses. We may thence learn,

1. That we are not our own, and therefore are obliged to submit with patience to his disposal of us. 2. We ought to be content with that share of accommodations which he allows, since all things are his, and we can claim nothing from him: 3. to be satisfied when he withdraws that of which he has before afforded us the enjoyment: 4. to be heartily thankful for all we ever have or enjoy: 5. carefully to manage and employ all which is put into our hands for his interest and service: 6. to be humble and sober, not to be conceited, or to glory in regard to any thing we love.

IV. That sense, according to which the word signifies

God's containing all things by his immense presence, is also of most excellent use.

We thereby may learn with what care, circumspection, modesty, and integrity we ought always to manage our conversation and behavior; since we continually think, and speak, and act in the immediate presence of God, *whose eyes are on the ways of men*, &c. Hence also we are prompted to frequent addresses of prayer, thanksgiving, and all kind of adoration.

V. Lastly, the consideration that God upholds all things, and consequently ourselves, in being, may powerfully deter us from offending him: for put the case, that our life and all the comforts of living depended on the bounty and pleasure of any person; should we not be very wary and fearful of offending such an one? Application of this in respect to God. Conclusion.

The Father Almighty,

SERMON XI.

REVELATIONS, CHAP. XI.—VERSE 17.

O Lord God Almighty.

EVERY attribute of God is a proper and useful object for our consideration; as being apt to mind us of our duty, and to excite us to the practice thereof; to beget in us those dispositions of mind (that love and reverence toward God, that faith and hope in him) which we ought to have; and to draw from us real performances of obedience to him: each of them doth ground obligations to piety, and yieldeth arguments to the practice thereof; to which purposes, that considering this divine attribute, 'Almighty,' (mentioned in our text,) doth much avail, and that it therefore well deserveth to be pressed on us, will appear more distinctly from the application we shall make thereof: at present we may perceive how considerable it is, by observing in gross; 1. That it is frequently in holy Scripture singled forth, as most proper to God; as most fully expressive of his glorious excellency and majesty; particularly the most illuminate ministers of God's praise, the seraphim's in Isaiah, the four wights (or living creatures) in this book; and the twenty-four elders in this place, do therefore use it. 2. It is that attribute, which is alone most expressly set down in our Creed, as especially necessary to be believed and considered: we say therein, I believe in God the Father Almighty. 3. It is that with which we daily address our devotions unto God; in our prayers we say, 'Almighty and most merciful Father;' in our praises we cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God

Almighty,' or (which is the same) 'Lord God of Sabaoth.' It seems therefore fit and useful, that we should well understand the proper and full meaning thereof, together with the obligations grounded thereon, and the inducements it affordeth to good practice; that so when we hear it used in Scripture, when we profess to believe it, when we apply it to God in our devotions, we may so reflect thereon, as to be admonished of our duty, and moved to the performance thereof. First therefore I will endeavor somewhat to explain it; then shall make a practical application thereof.

The title, epithet, or attribute παντοκράτωρ, which we (finding no other word more properly and fully to express it) do render Almighty, or omnipotent, is frequently in a manner peculiar and characteristical ascribed to God: the use thereof in the New Testament is, by citation or imitation, transferred from the Greek of the Old, where it serveth to express those two famous and usual names of God, 'Sabaoth and Shaddai: especially it answereth to the former; for the latter is only rendered thereby in some places of the book of Job: but the former, Sabaoth, (when interpreted and not left in its own sound,) is constantly rendered παντοκράτωρ. I call Sabaoth a name of God; for that it is so, it is in several places expressly affirmed; as in Jeremiah; 'Their Redeemer is strong, Jehovah Sabaoth is his name:' and in Isaiah; 'For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is his name:' and in Amos; 'He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought—Jehovah Elohei Sabaoth is his name,' (from a sort of Jove, called Ζεὺς Ζαββάσιος, mentioned in some Pagan writers,* was, as some critics suppose, deduced.) Now as all the names and appellations of God are significant, and denote some perfection, or some prerogative belonging to him, (as Jehovah signifieth his self-subsistence, independency, immutability, and eternity; Elohim his omnipotence; Shaddai his all-sufficiency; Adonai his supreme dominion and authority,) so doth this name or title, Sabaoth, primitively seem to import God's universal conduct and managery

* Cicero, Aristoph. &c. Seld. de Diis S. cap. 3.

of all creatures: for all things in the world, as being ranged in a goodly and convenient order, (like an army marching in array, or marshalled to battle,) are called armies, or Sabaoth. Thus, (after the history of the creation it is said,) 'The heavens and earth were finished, and all the host of them,' (πᾶς κόσμος αὐτῶν, all the furniture, or all the battalion of them:) and, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,' saith the psalmist, 'and all the host of them:' and, 'Bless the Lord all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure;' that is, all creatures which are subject to his command, and subservient to his will: and, 'Lift up,' saith Isaiah, 'your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things; that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth:' where God is represented to us as the general of an army, drawing forth and ordering his creatures, as a general summoneth to a rendezvous, mustereth and embatelleth his troops: hence this title of Sabaoth, which is rendered παντοκράτωρ, doth seem derived.

But we need not deal so strictly, as to limit the sense of this word, according to its original rise, or its use in translation; but since it hath been authenticated by its use in the holy fountains of truth, the New Testament, and is there used so as to signify or imply the sum of divine perfections and pre-eminences; being, as it seems, selected especially for that purpose, we may presume to take it in its common latitude, for ὁ πάντων κραταιός, or ὁ πάντων κράτος ἔχων; according to which extent, it may have various importances, somewhat different; it may accordingly denote, 1. right, or authority, over all beings, *omnipotestas*; and, 2. a power, or ability, to do all things, *omnipotentia*: 3. the actual exercise of such authority, and such power in ruling and disposing all things; *omni-potentatus*: 4. the possession of all things; or the containing and holding all things in his hand; *omni-tenentia*, (it is St. Augustine's word:) 5. the preservation or upholding of all things in their being and state: for the word κρατεῖν, according to its propriety and ordinary use, may infer and ground all these significations; and according to them all, God is truly παντοκράτωρ. Let us survey the particulars, and show how

God, especially in holy Scripture, is represented in respect to them.

I. God is παντοκράτωρ, as having a just right and authority over all things: he naturally is the sovereign Lord and Emperor of the world; for whatever imaginable reason or ground there is of authority, doth in respect to all things agree unto God. Aristotle, in his Politics, discourseth thus: Government doth aim at and tend to the mutual benefit of the governor and governed; he therefore who is most able and best disposed to provide for and procure the common benefit, is according to natural reason and justice (secluding other considerations of laws and compacts, of former constitutions, of present possession, and the like) to be the governor; or he deserves, and is fit to be so, and (no other reason hindering) becometh such. ('That,' saith the philosopher, 'which naturally is apt or able to provide, doth naturally rule, and naturally lordeth:') whence the soul hath a right to govern the body; and men naturally do rule over beasts; and were there any such persons as did without any question very eminently exceed others in wisdom and goodness, to them, according to natural congruity, the government of others would appertain; the common advantage so requiring: and if such excellency of nature be a foundation of authority, then God, who in wisdom and goodness doth incomparably surpass all things, hath assuredly the right to govern all: so a Pagan author could discourse; 'There is,' saith Cicero, 'nothing better than God; therefore it is necessary the world should be ruled by him:'* he is the only wise, (as St Paul telleth us,) and thence most able; he is only good, (as our Saviour teacheth us,) and thence most apt to manage all things for the general welfare and benefit of the world. If also eminency of power doth qualify for dominion, (as it surely doth; for that which cannot be withstood must in reason be submitted to; it is vain to question that authority, which by force altogether irresistible can assert and maintain itself,) God hath the only right, nothing in the world being able to contest his title; for, 'Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto

* De N. D. 2.

the Lord? O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?' says the holy psalmist contemplating this divine attribute: all things are weak and feeble in comparison; are altogether in his hand, and under his feet; are throughly at his discretion and disposal: 'The Lord,' saith the prophet, 'is the true God, and the everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation:' and, 'How terrible,' saith the psalmist, 'art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee—He ruleth by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves.'

If also to have made all things, and to preserve them, doth create a right of governing, (as it must needs do so: for what can we justly challenge a dominion over, if not over our own works, over that which we continually keep and nourish; over that which altogether depends on us, and which subsists at our pleasure?) then well may the apocalyptical elders thus acknowlege: 'Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power,' (that is, to possess the royal majesty and sovereign dominion over the world:) 'for thou hast made all things, and for thy will they are and were created:' well might 'every creature that is in the heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth, and those things which are in the sea, and all things in them, cry out there; To him that sitteth on the throne (and to the Lamb) be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion for ever and ever:' well might king Hezekiah say, 'O Lord of hosts—thou art the God; thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth:' and the Levites in Nehemiah; 'Thou, even thou, art the Lord alone; thou hast made heaven and earth; the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts; the earth, and all things that are therein; the sea, and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all; and all the host of heaven worshippeth thee.' Thus is God παντοκράτωρ; as he is on all imaginable accounts, and according to all reasonable grounds of right, the rightful Sovereign of all things: as he is **Divúmque homi-*

* Virg. Æn. 10.

æ̃mque potestas, as the wisest poet doth acknowlege and style him.

2. He is also such in regard to his infinite power, as that word may signify omnipotent. Natural light affordeth pregnant arguments of the greatness of his power, displayed in the constitution and conservation of the world; his disposing so stupendously vast, so unconceivably various creatures into so comely and stable a posture, whence 'his eternal power and divinity are discerned,' as St. Paul telleth us; for he that could effect so much, his power must needs be far greater than we can imagine or comprehend; to natural light, I say, it is incomprehensibly great, and exceedeth all definite limits; but holy Scripture more clearly and fully declareth the extent of his power; asserting that it is not only in respect to our weak conceit and narrow capacity, but in itself truly infinite, reaching the utmost possibility of things: it teacheth us that whatever is not contrary to his nature, or to his essential perfections, (to his goodness, fidelity, holiness, wisdom;) which it doth not misbecome him to do; or which is not repugnant to the nature of things to be done, (that is, which doth not imply a contradiction, and thereby is impossible, and becomes no object of power;) for such things 'he cannot do, because he is omnipotent:' as St. Austin acutely says;* he is able with perfect ease and facility to achieve it: there is among things good and possible nothing so difficult but he can perform it; nothing so strong and stubborn but he can subdue it: 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?' said God to Abraham, when Sarah doubted, or wondered concerning the promise that she in so extreme an age should become fruitful: 'Behold,' said the prophet Jeremiah in his prayer, 'thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and thy stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee;' οὐκ ἀδυνατήσει Θεῷ πᾶν ῥῆμα· 'Nothing (that can be said, or conceived, or performed) shall be impossible to God,' if he pleaseth to design or undertake it, said the angel to the blessed virgin, when he delivered so strange a message to her concerning an event so wonderful and supernatural as our Saviour's conception of her: that a rich man should be

* De Civ. D. v. 10.

induced intirely to comply with God's will, and willingly to part with all, our Saviour affirmed exceedingly difficult, (hardly any thing could be supposed more difficult; harder it was than 'for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle;') but to satisfy his disciples' scruple thence arising, he subjoins; 'With men (or according to the common sense of men) this is impossible, but to God all things are possible:' 'In thine hand,' said king Jehoshaphat, 'there is power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee:' and king Nebuchadnezzar having felt an experiment of his power, and being returned to a right understanding, confesseth thus: 'He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' 'The Lord of hosts,' saith the prophet, 'hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?' To stop the sun in his career, to make the sea stand on an heap, to draw streams of water from a rock, to restrain fire from burning, to restore the blind and lame, to raise the dead, to suspend, thwart, invert the course of nature, with all such things which we so wonder at, and term miracles, are comparatively but slender, and, as it were, perfunctory instances of his power; for with the greatest ease, by the least exertion of his power, by a thought, a look, a touch, a word, the greatest things are performed; 'He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke:' 'He overturneth the mountains in his anger, and shaketh the earth out of her place:' 'The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof.' These seem great and strange effects of power; yet in respect to what he can do and hath done, they are small; for he at first made the whole world with a word; so the history of the creation expresseth it, and so the psalmist telleth us; 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;' and by a word he doth preserve it, 'upholding,' as the Apostle to the Hebrews speaketh, 'all things by the word of his power,' or by his powerful word; and by a word he can destroy and annihilate all things; yea more easily, in a manner, he can do it, even by his mere silence, or by withdrawing that salutary breath, by virtue of which all things subsist; 'Thou hidest thy face,' saith

the psalmist, 'they are troubled; thou withholdest thy breath, they die and return to their dust.' For we may consider that in this respect also God is all-powerful, as being the source from which all power is derived, by which all power is sustained, on which all power doth depend: he not only can do all things inclusively, but exclusively, or so that nothing can be done without him: that of our Saviour, 'Without me ye can do nothing,' is not only true in spiritual, but in all other matters: 'He,' as St. Paul preached at Athens, 'giveth life (or being, with all vital faculties) and breath, (that is, all natural powers) and all things unto all:' 'In him (or rather, by him) we live, and move, and have our being:' that is, whatever we are, whatever we have, whatever we can do, doth proceed from him, doth depend on him. Thus is God *καντοκράτωρ*, as all-powerful.

3. God is also so, by reason that he doth actually exercise all dominion, and doth exert his power continually, according to his good pleasure: he not only hath a just title to govern all things, and a perfect ability to sway in all matters, but he constantly useth them: 'The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven, and his kindom ruleth over all:' 'God is the King of all the earth; God reigneth over the heathen,' (or the nations;) 'God sitteth on the throne of his holiness:' 'The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens: Who is like unto the Lord our God, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?' It is indeed, as the holy man saith, a great condescension in God, that he will vouchsafe to have the inspection and administration of things so much inferior to him; yet for the common good of his creatures he is pleased to do it: 'Thine,' saith king David, 'O Lord, is the kingdom, and thou art exalted as head above all; both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; in thine hand is power and might,' &c. He is indeed the only Governor, absolutely, originally, and independently so; *ὁ μόνος δυνάστης*, the only Potentate, as St. Paul calleth him; all authority and power are imparted by him, and subordinate to him; from his disposal and direction all potentates do receive them; in his name and behalf, by virtue of his commission and command, as his delegates and ministers, for his honor, in-

terest, and service, they administer any just dominion or power. It was Nebuchadnezzar's doom to be driven from men, until he did understand and embrace this truth, so necessary for all governors to know and consider; that, 'The Most High ruleth in the kindom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will;' that, 'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him:' 'Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another:' 'There is no power but from God; the powers that are, are appointed by God:' 'The judgment is God's,' (as Moses said in his charge to the judges of Israel,) being exercised by his order, and in his behalf. Thus is God παντοκράτωρ, as the only absolute sovereign Lord, the Author and Fountain of all just authority, 'the Lord of lords, and King of kings,' as the Scripture often doth style him.

4. God is also παντοκράτωρ, as the true proprietary and just possessor of all things. 'Blessed be Abraham,' said king Melchizedek, 'of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:' and, 'Behold,' said Moses to his people, 'the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God; the earth also, with all that is therein:' and, 'The earth,' saith the psalmist, 'is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it on the seas, and prepared it on the floods:' and, 'The heavens,' saith he again, 'are thine, the earth also is thine; as for the world, and the fulness thereof,' (that is, all which the world contains, all with which it is furnished and replenished,) 'thou hast founded them:' and, 'The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.' All things, they say, are the goods and possessions of God; proving it from hence, that he made them, and thereby acquired a propriety in them: for there is no more evident and perfect ground of propriety than this. The products of our invention and care, the fruits of our endeavor and industry, even we do think that reasonably we may call our own, and justly claim the enjoyment of: how much more he, that by an original, uncommunicated, independent wisdom and power, hath contrived and produced all things! From thence surely doth result such a title to them all, that

the intire and absolute disposal of them doth appertain to him; so that he may apply them, as the potter doth the vessels which he maketh, (it is the Scripture comparison,) to what use he thinketh good; that he may freely place and bestow them where he pleaseth; that he may take them away, or transfer them, when he seeth fit: they can never be so alienated from him, that the enjoyment of them doth not wholly depend on him, and that at pleasure (his wisdom and goodness permitting, his truth and word being solved) he may not resume them to himself.

5. God is also παντοκράτωρ, as containing and comprehending all things by his immense presence and infinite capacity: it is a name which the Jewish doctors commonly apply to God, *hamakom*,* the place, because all things do subsist in him; he being, as St. Hierome speaks, 'infused through all things, and circumfused about all things; so as to penetrate them within, and to contain them without;' so as to be 'within all things not included, and without all things not excluded:' and, 'We do not,' saith Minutius Felix, 'only live in the eye, but in the bosom of God.'† The whole world, how vast soever it seemeth to our narrow conceit, is but as a drop, or as an atom of dust, in his hand: 'Behold,' saith the prophet elegantly and truly, 'the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; all nations are before him as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity:' and, 'I fill heaven and earth,' saith God in Jeremiah: and king Solomon in his prayer saith more; 'Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee:' and, 'Whither,' saith the psalmist, 'shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.'

6. Lastly, God is παντοκράτωρ in regard that he sustains and preserves all things. 'When,' saith St. Gregory Nyssen, 'we

* המקום † Hier. ad Marcell. 5.

hear the word παντοκράτωρ, we understand this, that God containeth all things in being:' 'Thou,' say the Levites in Nehemiah, 'even thou, art God alone; thou hast made heaven and earth, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth, and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.'

In all these respects and senses doth the title παντοκράτωρ (which we for want of a word more adequate and expressive, do render *Almighty*) belong to God: the Greek word, in the latitude of its signification, according to its etymology, comprehendeth all these senses, and the design in its use, as we before touched, warranteth the taking it in the largest acception; but however it certainly respecteth the former senses, denoting the absolute universal sovereignty and the immense irresistible power of God: the belief and consideration of which particulars is of great importance, and may have a very useful influence on our practice: for,

I. If God be the just Sovereign of all things, having a right to govern the world, and actually exercising it; then,

1. We see our condition and state here in this world. We live not in an anarchy, or in perfect liberty; we are not our own masters, or have a right to guide our actions according to our own will, or after our own fancy; but are under government; a government most absolute and arbitrary; the laws whereof we may not dispute, the proceedings whereof we cannot resist. Whence,

2. We understand our duty; that as subjects and vassals we are obliged to render all awful reverence, worship, and obedience to God; humbly to adore the majesty, readily to perform the commands, and patiently to submit to the will of our great Sovereign; to conform all our actions to that heavenly law, under which we are born and live in the world. 'We do not,' even Plutarch could tell us, 'come hither into life to make laws, but to obey those which are appointed by God, who ordereth all things; to observe the decrees of destiny and Providence.'*

3. Hence we may discern the heinousness of every sin, or

* Consul. ad Apol.

transgression of God's law; it receiving great aggravation hence. It hence appeareth not only a matter of simple folly, or private inconvenience, (contrary to our reason,) but of public mischief and general ill consequence; being committed against the crown and dignity of God Almighty; against the peace and order of the world; which subsist by the observation of his laws. Every sin is an act of high rebellion, a breach of our natural allegiance, 'a lifting up ourselves,' as is said of Belshazzar, 'against our Sovereign; an infringing that right, and violating that honor of his, which he by his place and office is concerned to maintain and vindicate.

4. We may hence learn what reason we have to be content in every condition, and to undergo patiently every event befalling us: for that our station is allotted to us by an unquestionable right, and all things are dispensed to us by a common law, from which nothing can be exempted; for that things come not by a blind necessity or chance, but are disposed and managed by sovereign reason and wisdom. 'We must,' saith an Ethnic philosopher, 'not be displeased at any of these things; for we are come into that world, where we must live by these laws:' and, 'A good man must needs be granted to be highly pious toward God; he therefore will sustain all accidents with equanimity; as knowing them to happen unto him by a divine law, by which all things proceed.'* It were indeed intolerable arrogance and frowardness in us to desire an exemption from that common law, to which all things are subject; to wish ourselves out of that order, in which the all-guiding Providence hath set us; to be dissatisfied with any thing, which by the Supreme Wisdom is assigned to us: it becometh us to say with old Eli, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;' to say on all occasions with David; 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' On this consideration we should not only be satisfied with, and acquiesce in, but praise and adore all occurrences of Providence, how unkindly soever and distasteful they appear to us; supposing a just and reasonable cause to lie under them, although indiscernible to us. Yea, farther,

* Sen. Ep. 91.

5. It is a matter of great consolation to reflect that we and all the world are under such a government; it is a common felicity, it is our particular happiness, that we are so; for it is no unjust usurper, it is no merciless tyrant, it is no fond, no weak, no careless person that we are in subjection to, but a most just, most mild, most gracious, most wise, most powerful, most vigilant Lord; who will deal most equally and most benignly with us; who sincerely and earnestly tenders our welfare; who is watchful and careful for our good; who is able to provide for all our needs, and to protect us from all mischief; all whose laws do only aim at our benefit; all whose proceedings toward us are full of equity, goodness, and truth; who will not only favorably accept, but most bountifully recompense our obedience; whom to serve and obey is a privilege far better and more desirable for us, than to be free, than to be wholly at our own disposal, and under our own guidance; the very nature and the end of his government being only to preserve us, and to rescue us from the errors, the slaveries, the vexations and miseries we are apt to incur; by virtue of whose universal dominion we are secured, that no malice of devil, no unjustice of men, no sort of enemy whatever, (excepting our own wilful disobedience to his laws and directions,) shall be able to do us harm; for all them he governs and he curbs no less than ourselves. Of this our King it is truly said, that 'justice and judgment are the establishment of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face;' that, 'He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his doings;' that, 'The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre;' that 'His yoke is easy, and his burden light.' In confidence of his protection we may say with the psalmist, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? God is our refuge and strength—therefore will I not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. In God have I put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.' Well therefore may we, may the whole world, in consideration of our being under so good a Governor, be excited to joy and jubilation with the psalmist; 'O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph: for the Lord

most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.' 'Say among the nations, that the Lord reigneth; the world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved; he shall judge the people righteously: let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad,' &c. 'Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.' Or with those in the Revelation; 'Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honor unto him.' All the world hath exceeding reason not only to be content, but to rejoice and triumph in being subject to such a Governor, so able, so willing to maintain peace, good order, and equity therein: so that we also are obliged to bless and thank God, that he condescends so far, and vouchsafes to undertake the tuition and oversight of the world; obeying the psalmist's exhortation; 'The Lord,' saith he, 'hath prepared his throne in heaven, and his kingdom ruleth over all:' therefore, 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels—Bless the Lord, all his hosts—Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominions;' imitating herein those elders in the Revelation, who say, 'We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken unto thee thy great power, and hast reigned.' They who imagine the world is not governed at all, but that with unloosed reins it runneth on at random, are very foolish: but more such are they who wish it to be so, and in their desires depose God from his throne; for they do wish for anarchy and confusion in their country, instead of the most excellent establishment and order, maintained by the wisest and ablest government. That good emperor was better advised, and better affected, who said, 'What good were it for me to live in a world void of a deity and providence?' and, 'Why should I desire to continue in such a casual jumble and rout of things?'* The world, he well supposed, divine governance being excluded, would be a strange, disorderly, and uncomfortable place to abide in. And old Socrates, in the *Phædon*, discoursing about his departure hence, comforts himself in that, as he

* Ant. ii. §. 11.

hoped, he was going thither, where the Gods did preside with a nearer inspection and a more apparent influence. These were worthy desires and noble hopes proceeding from natural reason and moral virtue in such persons; but much more reason and much greater obligation have we to be satisfied with, and to comfort ourselves in the assurance, that all things, even at present, here are moderated by a superintendency far more equal and more propitious than they could imagine or hope. These and such like practical uses the belief and consideration of God's sovereign authority and dominion do afford.

II. The belief and consideration of God's immense and uncontrollable power is also of very great importance and influence on practice.

1. It serveth to beget in us a due awe and dread of God: considering God's other attributes may breed in us a high esteem and hearty love of God; but the consideration of his power is that which naturally and reasonably produceth a great fear of him: he is most amiable for his goodness, and in regard to his wisdom greatly venerable; but his power, arming the rest, renders him exceedingly terrible. 'Hear ye this,' it is said in the prophet Jeremiah, 'O foolish people, and without understanding;' 'Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which hath placed the sand for the bounds of the sea?' and, 'Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might: who would not fear thee, O thou king of nations?' and, 'I will show you,' saith our Saviour, 'whom ye should fear;' 'Fear him, who after he hath killed (or who beside killing) hath power to cast into hell; I say unto you, Fear him:' great reason he had so earnestly to inculcate that admonition, the case being so apparent and so important.

2. This point doth consequently in high measure dissuade and deter us from sin, implying the extreme folly in committing it, and the inevitable mischief following it. The consideration of God's other attributes infer it to be great baseness and stupidity to oppose or displease God, but the consideration of this demonstrateth it to be infinite madness to do so. For to wrong, dishonor, and displease him, that is so good and beneficent to us, is great disingenuity and unworthiness; to swerve from his

advice and direction, who is only and perfectly wise, is highly vain and unreasonable; but for so feeble and impotent things as we are to contest with and withstand, to provoke and offend Omnipotency, (that which with infinite ease can defeat and subdue us, can depress us into misery, can crush us into nothing,) is most palpably the top of insolent wildness. It is Moses's argument, whereby he presseth obedience to his law; 'Circumcise therefore,' saith he, 'the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked; for the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of Lords, a great God, and a mighty, and a terrible.' It is no less an evidently convincing, than a vehemently affecting increpation, that of St. Paul; 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' And God himself in Job useth the like scheme of speech; 'Hast thou an arm like God? and canst thou thunder with a voice like him?' If thou art as strong, if thou hast such an arm, then mayest thou perhaps dare to contend with him, and adventure to provoke him: but if thou nowise art his match, if thou art infinitely short of him in strength, how vain and rash a thing is it for thee to defy him thus, to enter with him into the lists, to strive and grapple with him! to do as the sinner in Job is expressed doing; 'He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.' All presumptuous sinning is described and represented in Scripture as a comparing, and in effect preferring, our power and force in regard to the power of God; or as a tempting God, and challenging him to battle; or as an actual coping, contention, and fighting with him: sinners, as such, are styled the adversaries of God, and rebels against him; such as rise up, and lift up themselves, and raise their hand against him; which doth either imply in them a more than gigantic pride and arrogance, in overvaluing their own power and undervaluing the power of God, (which doth also involve infidelity and disbelief of God's omnipotence; for he who believeth that, cannot take himself for God's match, or dare to struggle with him;) or it argueth a most strange inconsiderateness and vanity, in presuming, at so infinite a disadvantage, without any ground of confidence, without any hope of success, to oppose God's will and power. Οὐ δηναιὸς, ὃς ἀθανάτοισι μάχοιτο: 'He is not long lived, who fighteth with the immortals,' old

Homer could tell us; the same which the prophet says; 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!' Nothing indeed can be more reasonable than that advice of the preacher; 'Contend not with him that is mightier than thou:' which in this case in effect is the same with this: Do not, by sinning, offend or provoke God.

3. Whence likewise the consideration of this point may dispose us to weigh our counsels, and thereon not to adventure on any unwarrantable resolution or design; there being so apparent reason to despair of success, an insuperable power being always ready to obstruct and cross us in the carriage of such designs, with whatever cunning laid, or backed with whatever might; for hence those sayings in Scripture are manifestly verified: 'There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord:' and, 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper:' and, 'He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?'

4. It also likewise serveth to depress in us all confidence in ourselves, and in all other things, as to any security in them or succor from them: for all things in the world, though they conspire and combine together all their forces, will be altogether unable to support us, to assist us, to defend us against the Divine power, or indeed without it; they being all, otherwise than as maintained by him, infinitely feeble and frail: 'Though hand join in hand, (that is, notwithstanding the conjunction of all powers whatever,) the wicked shall not be unpunished,' saith the wise man: and, 'I kill,' saith God, 'and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any thing that can deliver out of my hand:' and, 'No king is saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength; a horse is a vain thing for safety.'

5. It therefore also may be of a special efficacy to quell and mortify in us the vices of pride, haughtiness, arrogance, self-will, stubbornness, and contumacy; since contemplating the power of God we cannot but perceive ourselves to be very pitiful, impotent, and insignificant things; who without permission cannot effect any thing; who cannot expect in any case to have our will; who have continually curbs in our mouths,

and manacles on our hands; so that we cannot say or do any thing, cannot so much as stir, or endeavor any thing, without check or control; being under a predominant force, 'which always resisteth the proud;' under the power of him who hath said, 'The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down;' whose character and peculiar work it is to 'behold every one that is proud, and to abase him; to cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and to lay low the haughtiness of the terrible;' to 'break the high arm, and to bring down the high looks;' and to 'stain the pride of all glory.' Whence there is all the reason in the world that we should obey St. Peter's injunction; to 'humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.'

6. The consideration of God's omnipotence serveth to breed and nourish faith in God, as to the certain performance of his word and promises: for let the accomplishment of them be to appearance never so difficult or improbable, yet he is able to perform them, and will therefore do it. 'The Strength of Israel,' as Samuel said, 'will not lie, nor repent:' and, 'Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken it, and shall he not make it good?' said Balaam, inspiredly: and, 'The Lord of hosts,' saith Isaiah, hath purposed it, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?' and, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it:' and, 'My word that goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper unto the thing whereunto I sent it:' and, 'The counsel of the Lord,' saith the psalmist, 'standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations:' 'Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him; for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;' and, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' So doth God assert his immutable fidelity, and considering his indefectible power doth assure us that we may rely on his word; and the doing so is very grateful and acceptable to God; for it was that virtue for which Abraham is so highly commended and so richly rewarded: 'He did not,'

saith St. Paul of him, 'stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform:' to do otherwise is very displeasing and offensive to God; for we do thereby either doubt of his veracity, so, as St. John saith, 'making him a liar;' or we disbelieve his power, and make him impotent in our conceit: which to do is high injury to God, and detestable sacrilege. Hence also,

7. Particularly this consideration may produce and cherish our faith in the sufficiency of God's providence, and may induce us intirely to rely on it. For if God be omnipotent, then he is easily able to supply us in all our needs, to relieve us in all our straits, to protect us from all danger and mischief; and being able, he will not fail to do it, since his goodness also disposeth him thereto, and his word engageth him; he having declared himself to be the patron, protector, and benefactor of the needy; he having promised to help, relieve, and comfort those who seek and cry unto him. Distrust in God's providence is always grounded either in the disbelief of God's goodness or of his power; either in supposing him to be unwilling or unable to do us good; and that is commonly grounded on the latter, the Israelites' constant behavior in the wilderness (representing the ordinary conversation of men in this world) doth inform us; who conceived their needs greater, than that God was able to supply them; their enemies stronger, than that by God's assistance they could withstand or subdue them; the obstacles to their proceedings such, that God himself could not carry them through them; for, as the Psalmist representeth their behavior and discourse, 'They spake against God, saying, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?' and that from their conceiting God unable to convey them through all dangers and difficulties, to render them victorious over the tall men and the fenced cities of Canaan, they, notwithstanding God's presence with them, and ready aid, desponded in heart, and murmured, and provoked God, and in consequence of such misbehavior forfeited obtaining the rest propounded to them, many passages in the story do show

us. We in practice do commonly follow them, notwithstanding the many experiments of God's wonderful power and goodness, frequently suspecting that God cannot supply our necessities or satisfy our desires; whence we are either overborne with anxiety, and become disconsolate, or have recourse for succor and relief to other aids; deserting God, as the prophet intimates, when he (withal declaring the offence God taketh at such miscarriages, with the guilt and mischief we thereby incur) pronounceth thus: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, &c.' Whence our Saviour took it ill of his disciples, and rebuked them, when even in the most imminent and affrighting dangers they gave place to fear or doubt; as when in a great tempest, 'the ship being even covered with waves, they being afraid, cried out, Lord save us, we perish;' he said unto them, τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι; 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' And when St. Peter, walking on waves, and beginning to sink, his heart misgiving, in like manner cried out, 'Lord save me;' our Lord also reproves him with an ὀλιγόπιστε, τί ἐδίστασας; 'O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?' Whence we both learn that it is our want or weakness of faith which makes us in our greatest needs ready to sink, and that it is not excusable for us in the extremity of danger to doubt of God's protection and succor. Farther,

8. This consideration affordeth comfort and encouragement unto us in the undertaking and prosecution of honest and prudent enterprises, giving us to hope confidently for success, how difficult or dangerous soever it appear unto us; all difficulties and improbabilities vanishing before that Omnipotency which abetteth and backeth such endeavors; the which is by faith imparted and appropriated unto us; so that we, with St. Paul, 'are able to do all things by God strengthening us.' Nothing is so high or difficult (if just and reasonable) which a resolute faith in the divine power cannot easily surmount and achieve: a word, seconded therewith, can transplant trees and transfer mountains any whither: 'If ye,' saith our Lord, 'have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou

removed hence to yonder place, and it shall be removed:' 'Ye may say to this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the roots, and be thou planted in the sea, and it shall obey you;' καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσει ὑμῖν, and there is nothing,' adds our Saviour, 'which shall be impossible unto you;' for, as he saith again, 'All things are possible to him that believeth:' that is, unto him who relieth on the divine power; for that the faith he speaks of referreth thither, appeareth by several like passages in the gospel; as for instance, in that, where to the blind men imploring his relief, our Lord puts this question: 'Do ye believe that I can do this?' and they answering, 'Yes, Lord;' he thereon replies, 'According to your faith be it done unto you.' In contemplation of this power, we may, if our duty or good reason do call us forth, how small or weak soever in ourselves, how destitute soever of defensive arms or offensive weapons, naked and unarmed, 'with a sling and a stone,' go out against the biggest and best-armed Philistine, nothing doubtful of victory; it will be enough if we can say with David, 'I come unto thee in the name of the Lord of hosts;' that is, confiding in his powerful help, as my invincible weapon and defence. But so much for this particular.

III. That notion of the word Almighty, which implieth God's being universal proprietary and possessor of all things, hath likewise many good uses; we shall only name them, without enlarging on them: we thence learn,

1. That we ourselves are not our own, and therefore ought to submit ourselves with content and patience to God's disposal; for that, as it is in the gospel, God may 'do what he pleaseth with his own.' Whence also we are bound, as St. Paul enjoineth us, 'to glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are God's.'

2. That also therefore we ought to be content with that portion of accommodations here which God alloweth us; for that since every thing is his, we can claim nothing to ourselves; all we have doth proceed from mere liberality and bounty.

3. The same reason obligeth us to be satisfied, whenever Providence withdraweth what it did afford us the enjoyment of; for God doth never so communicate any thing as to divest him-

self of the paramount title and propriety therein; all things have an immutable relation to him as Lord, and cannot be alienated from him; whence he may justly, when he pleaseth, recal or resume them into his hand.

4. Yea, hence we are obliged to be heartily thankful for all we ever have or enjoy; for that nothing is on any account ours, or can be due to us from him; all proceeding from pure kindness and goodness.

5. We are hence obliged carefully to manage and employ all which is put into our hands, for his interest and service; as honest tenants and faithful stewards, making just returns and improvements; not embezzling nor abusing any of his goods committed to us.

6. Lastly, we may learn hence to be humble and sober; not to be conceited or elevated in mind, or apt to glory, in regard to any thing we have; since we have nothing that we can justly esteem or properly call our own.

IV. That sense, according to which the word doth signify God's containing all things by his immense presence, is also of most excellent use and influence on our practice. We thereby may learn with what care and circumspection, with what reverence and modesty, with what innocence and integrity, we ought always and in all places to manage our conversation and behavior; since we continually do think, and speak, and act in the immediate presence and under the inspection of God; whose 'eyes are on the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings;' who 'searcheth and trieth our hearts,' and 'possesseth our reins;' who 'encompasseth our path,' and 'is acquainted with all our ways;' to whose 'eyes all things are naked and dissected;' according to the significant and emphatical expressions of Scripture. Did we stand in the sight of our king, we should not dare to behave ourselves rudely and indecently; were a virtuous person conscious of our doings, we should be ashamed to do any base or filthy thing; the oversight of a grave or a wise person would restrain us from practising vanities and impertinences; how much more should the glorious majesty of the most wise and holy God, being ever present to all our thoughts, words, and actions, if duly considered and reflected on, keep us within awe and compass! how can we, if

we remember that we abide always in a temple sanctified by God's presence, not contain ourselves in a careful and devout posture of soul!

This consideration also prompteth us to frequent addresses of prayer, thanksgiving, and all kind of adoration toward God: for all reason dictateth it to be unseemly to be in his presence with our back turned unto him, without demonstrations of regard and reverence to him, without answering him when he speaketh to us; that is, without corresponding to the invitations which he frequently by his providence maketh to us, of conversing with him, of seeking his favor and imploring his help, and returning thanks for his mercies.

V. Lastly, the consideration that God doth uphold all things, and consequently ourselves, in being, may on several good accounts be influential on our practice; particularly it may powerfully deter us from offending and displeasing him; for put case our life, our livelihood, all the conveniences and comforts of our being, should wholly depend on the bounty and pleasure of any person, should we not be very wary and fearful to affront, or injure, or displease such a person? It is in the highest degree so with us in respect to God; and why are we so inconsiderate, that the same reason hath not the same effect on us?

This consideration also should mind us how infinitely we are obliged to the goodness of God, who when he may by the bare withdrawing his conservative influence utterly destroy us, and suffer us to fall to nothing, doth, notwithstanding our many provocations, the many neglects and injuries he receiveth from us, continually preserve us in his hand, and every moment imparteth a new being to us. For which, and all his infinite mercies and favors toward us, let us for ever yield unto him all thanks and praise. Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XII.

ACTS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 24.

It may be demanded; why, besides that of *Almighty*, no other attribute of God is expressed in our Creed? Three reasons for this assigned. *Maker of heaven and earth.* This clause was of later times inserted in the Creed, to obviate the heresies of Marcion, Manichæus, &c. The ancient Hebrews having no word properly expressing the *universe*, used this phrase, adding sometimes the *sea* also. What is to be understood by *heaven* explained, and illustrated from Scripture: opinions of the ancient philosophers on this subject, in which they seem to have in great part agreed with the tenets of revelation. One particular however in which they dissented from what Christian piety inclines us to acknowlege, that is, the origin of matter, which they generally supposed to have existed from all eternity: their opinions on this head cited. Our reason shown to be deficient on this and other such topics. That in truth all the *matter* of things both could be, and really was, created by God, may appear from several reasons.

1. It is often in general terms affirmed in Scripture, that God did make all things; all things in heaven and earth. Now it is never, without urgent reason, allowable to make limitations of universal propositions, especially of such as are frequently so set down: this subject enlarged on.

2. Again, God is in Scripture affirmed to be the true proprietary and possessor of all things, none excepted: but how could he be so, if he did not make them? &c.

3. The supposing any thing to be eternal, uncreated, and independent of God, advances that being in those respects unto an equality with God, depriving him of those special perfections, independency and all-sufficiency, &c.

4. It may be asked, if God produced and inserted an active principle into nature, why might he not produce a passive one, such as matter is? what greater difficulty is there in this?

5. Yea farther, if he hath produced immaterial beings, such as angels and the souls of men, merely out of nothing, why might he not so produce matter?

6. The manner of God's making the world by mere will and command, argues that matter, or any other thing possible, might easily by the divine power be so produced: this explained.

7. Lastly, the holy text, describing the manner and order of creation, insinuates this truth: this shown. From these premises we may conclude, against the ancient philosophers, and those Christian sects who followed them, that God did in the strictest sense create all things out of nothing; and that this is the meaning of the title, *Maker of heaven and earth.*

Which title, as due to the true God only, divers heretics of old (especially those of the Gnostic sect) did contradict: their opinion, that the God who made the world and enacted the law, was different from him by whom the gospel was sent; the first being an angry and implacable Deity, the second a mild and beneficent one.

Akin to this error was that of the Manichæans, who supposed two first causes of things, from one of which proceeded good, and from the other evil: origin of this error, &c: strongly stated and laid down by Plutarch. His discourse however has two faulty suppositions: it supposes some things to be imperfect and evil which are not truly such; and to those which are truly such it assigns an imaginary and wrong cause.

1. First supposition shown to be false; for there is no sort of creature, which did not at first receive the Divine approbation: there are degrees indeed of perfection; but every thing contributes to the use and ornament of the whole. That which we call poison, is such only relatively: that which we call a monster, is not unnatural with regard to the whole contexture of causes: pain and grief, incident to the nature of things, are not properly evils, but adherences to the less perfect nature of things, &c.

2. But as for those real imperfections and evils, truly so called, habitual distempers of the soul, &c.; the true cause of them, is not the will or power of the Creator, but the wilfulness or impotency of creatures: the mischief also of pain and grief, consequent on those distempers, are partly to be imputed to us, and partly attributed to God; we by our faults deserve and draw them to ourselves; God in justice and wisdom inflicts them on us: this enlarged on.

Considerations on the manner how, and the reason why, God made the world.

He created it from a wise and free choice: he so made the world, that he could wholly have abstained from making it, or could have made it otherwise. He could not be fatally determined, since there was no superior cause to guide or constrain him, &c. And how he produced it, the Scripture teaches us: it was not by any laborious care and toil, but solely by his will and word, &c.

But since God did not only make the world freely but wisely; and since all wise agents act for some purpose, why (it may be asked) did God make the world? We may answer with Plato, *He was good; and he that is good doth not envy any good to any thing.* His natural benignity and munificence was the pure motive: this subject enlarged on. Some points of application stated.

1. The belief and consideration, that God is the Maker of heaven and earth, must necessarily beget in us the highest esteem, admiration, and adoration of him and his divine excellencies, &c.

2. It may produce in us hearty gratitude and humble affection towards God; since we ourselves, and all we have or enjoy, proceeded from him; and that with an especial good-will towards us.

3. It is also a great ground and motive to humility: for what is man in comparison with him who made heaven and earth, &c.

4. It is, farther, a proper inducement to trust and hope in God; a ground of consolation in every distress: for he that made all things can dispose of all: this enlarged on.

5. Finally, it ministers a general incitement to all obedience: all other things obey his laws; and shall we, who are placed, as it were, at the top of nature, and whom all nature serves, shall we alone transgress against its author and governor? Conclusion.

Maker of Heaven and Earth,

SERMON XII.

ACTS, CHAP. IV.—VERSE 24.

O Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.

IT may be demanded, why besides that of Almighty, no other attribute of God is expressed in our Creed? why for instance, the perfections of infinite wisdom and goodness are therein omitted? I answer,

1. That all such perfections are included in the notion of a God, whom when we profess to believe, we consequently do ascribe them to him (implicitly.) For he that should profess to believe in God, not acknowleging those perfections, would be inconsistent and contradictious to himself. *Deum negaret*, as Tertullian speaks, *auferendo quod Dei est.* He would deny God by withdrawing what belongs to God.

2. The title παντοκράτωρ, as implying God's universal providence in the preservation and government of the world, doth also involve or infer all Divine perfections displayed therein; all that glorious majesty and excellency, for which he is with highest respect to be honored and worshipped by us, which added to the name of God doth determine what God we mean, such as doth in all perfection excel, and with it doth govern the world.

3. I may add, thirdly, That the doctrine of God's universal providence being not altogether so evident to natural light as those attributes discovered in the making of the world, (more

having doubted thereof, and disputed against it with much more plausibility,) it was therefore convenient to add it; as a matter of faith clearly and fully (as we did show) attested unto by Divine revelation. So much may suffice to remove such a scruple concerning the fulness and sufficiency of the Creed in that particular. I proceed;

Maker of Heaven and Earth.

This clause is one of those which was of later times inserted into the Creed; none of the most ancient expositors thereof (Austin, Ruffin, Maximus Taurinensis, Chrysologus, &c.) taking any notice thereof. But Irenæus, Tertullian, and other most ancient writers, in their rules of faith, exhibit their sense thereof, and the Confessions of all General Councils (the Nicene, and those after it) express it. And there is great reason for it; not only thereby to disavow and decry those prodigious errors of Marcion, Manichæus, and other such heretics, which did then ascribe the creation of the world (or of some part thereof, seeming to their fancy less good and perfect) to another God, or Principle, inferior in worth and goodness to that God which was revealed in the gospel; or did opinionate two Principles, (not distinct only, but contrary one to the other;) from one whereof good things did proceed, from the other bad things were derived: but for that the creation of the world (which the holy Confessors of Christ do here in the text ascribe unto God) is that peculiarly august and admirable work, by which we learn that he is, and in good measure what he is; by which, I say, the existence of God is most strongly demonstrated, and in which his Divine perfections are most conspicuously displayed; which is the prime foundation of his authority over the world, and consequently the chief ground of all natural religion; of our just subjection, our reasonable duty, our humble devotion toward him: the title, 'Creator of heaven and earth,' is that also, which most especially characterises and distinguishes the God whom we believe and adore, from all false and fictitious deities; for, as the psalmist sings, 'All the gods of the nations are but idols, but the Lord made the heavens:' and, 'Thou,' prayeth Hezekiah, 'art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth:'

and, 'The gods,' saith the prophet Jeremiah, 'that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens:' and, 'We preach unto you,' said St. Paul to the ignorant Lycaonians, 'that ye should turn from those vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth.' It is therefore a point, which worthily hath been inserted into all creeds, and confessions of our faith, as a necessary object of our belief; and it is indeed a subject no less wholesome and fruitful, than high and noble; deserving that we employ our best thoughts and most careful attention on it: to the commemoration thereof God consecrated the great sabbatical festivity among his ancient people; nor should even the consideration of the great work concerning our redemption abolish the remembrance of it: to confer some advantage thereto, we shall now so discourse thereon, as first to propound some observations explicative thereof, and conducing to our information about it, then to apply the consideration thereof to practice.

We may observe that the ancient Hebrews, having, as it seems, in their language no one word properly signifying the world or universal frame and complex of things created, (that system, as the author *de Mundo* defines it, 'consisting of heaven and earth, and the natures contained in them,' *) did for to express it use a collection of its chief parts (chief absolutely in themselves, or such in respect to us,) 'the heaven, and the earth,' adding sometimes, because of the word earth its ambiguity, the sea also: yea sometimes, for fuller explication, subjoining to heaven its host, to earth its fulness, to the sea its contents. So, 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth,' saith Moses: and, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord, (in Jeremiah:) and, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail,' saith our Saviour: and, 'God,' saith St. Paul, 'who made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth;' (where the world and all things therein do signify the same with heaven and earth; he first uses the word (world) which the Greek language afforded, then adds the circumlocution,

* De M. 2. Lips. Phys. St. ii. 7.

whereby the Hebrews did express it.) By heaven and earth therefore we are, I say, to understand those two regions superior and inferior, into which the whole system of things is divided, together with all the beings that do reside in them, or do belong unto them, or are comprehended by them; as we see fully expressed in our text and otherwhere; particularly with utmost distinction by the angel in the Apocalypse; who swears 'by him that liveth for ever, who created the heaven, and the things that are therein, and the earth, with the things that therein are, and the sea, with the things therein.'

By heaven then is undersood all the superior region encompassing the globe of earth, and from it on all sides extended to a distance unconceivably vast and spacious, with all its parts, and furniture, and inhabitants; not only such things in it as are visible and material, but also those which are immaterial and invisible; so we are plainly taught by St. Paul: 'By him,' saith he, 'were created all things, which are in heaven, and which are in earth, both those that are visible, and those that are invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him:' that is, not only the material and sensible parts, or contents of heaven, (those bright and beautiful lamps exposed to our view, with the fluid matter, in which they may be conceived to float or swim,) but those beings of a more pure and refined substance, and thence indiscernible to our sense, however eminent in nature, mighty in power, exalted in dignity, whose ordinary residence and proper habitation (their ἴδιον οἰκητήριον, as St. Jude termeth it) is in those superior regions; in that they are courtiers and domestic officers of God,) whose throne, and special presence, or the place where he more peculiarly and amply discovereth himself, and displayeth his glory, is in heaven,) attending on him, and ministering to him; 'encircling his throne,' (as it is in the Revelation,) and always (as our Saviour telleth us) 'beholding his face;' even these all were made by God: the time indeed when, and the manner how those invisible sublime creatures were made, is not in the history of the creation, or otherwhere manifestly expressed, (because perhaps it doth exceed the capacity, or doth not suit the condition of man to understand them; or because it doth

not much concern us, or not much conduceth to our edification to know them:) but that they were made by God, and that when we call God the 'Maker of heaven,' they are comprehended, as the creatures of God, dwelling there, is evidently declared in Scripture;* for beside the fore-mentioned clear and full place of St. Paul, the angel fore-cited in the Revelation saith, that God 'created the heaven, καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, and the things in it;' and in our text it is said that God 'made heaven and all things in it,' (πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ,) which plainly includeth the angels; if all things in it, then surely the angels; who are often expressed to be in heaven, being indeed the principal and most considerable things therein. And, 'Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host,' (pray the Levites in Nehemiah,) where, according to the Jews' notion, who say there are three heavens; *Cœlum nubiferum*, or the firmament; *Cœlum astriferum*, the (starry) heavens; *Cœlum angeliferum*, or the heaven of heavens; where the angels reside, (the third heaven in St. Paul;) by the hosts of heaven, are meant the angels; as also the hosts of God do seem to signify in the 103rd psalm; where it is said, 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word; Bless ye the Lord, all his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.' Whence they are termed 'the sons of God;' as where in Job it is said, 'There was a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord;' and in several other places: and St. Jude telleth us of the lapsed angels, that they did not retain τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν, 'their beginning,' or primitive state; wherefore they had a beginning, and whence could they have that, but from God; who alone is eternal, (who alone originally, intrinsecally, and necessarily, hath, as St. Paul saith, immortality; and consequently alone, (as Aristotle by several arguments proveth against Plato,) hath eternity.) The angels also are subject to God's jurisdiction and governance, which argueth their

* The Greek Fathers commonly (and St. Hierome after them) conceived they were made before the creation of this material world: St. Austin thinks them meant under *fiat lux*.—De Civ. Dei, xi. 9.

proceeding from him, and dependence on him: in fine, the psalmist reckons them among the works of God; for having said, 'Bless the Lord, ye his angels;' and, 'Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts;' he recapitulating and concluding subjoins, 'Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion:' and again, in the 148th Psalm, summoning all the creation to a consort of doxology, he begins with the heavens, then proceeds to the earth, making a very particular recitation of the chief parts and inhabitants belonging to each; and in the first place mentioning the angels, then the stars, then the heaven of heavens, he subjoineth the reason why they ought all to praise God: 'Let them,' saith he, 'praise the name of the Lord; for he commanded, and they were created; he hath also established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree, which shall not pass.' Thus we are by Divine revelation instructed concerning the existence and original of those heavenly invisible beings, to the knowlege of whom, that they are, what they are, whence they are, natural light could not reach; although from the relics of primitive tradition even the Pagans themselves commonly in part did acknowlege this truth, calling all the inferior or secondary gods, whom they conceived to converse together happily (ἐν τῷ ἀνωτάτῳ τόπῳ) in the highest place above, as Aristotle saith in subjection to God, and attendance on him, the children of the Supreme God: Plato calls God Πατέρα καὶ Δημιουργὸν, the Father and framer of them all, according (as he avoweth himself) to ancient tradition. And thus concerning those beings piety doth oblige us to believe and profess that God is their Maker, it especially conducing to his glory to believe that he is the Author of their sublime natures, and donor of those excellent properties with which they are endowed, and wherein they so far surpass all other beings.

As for all other things both in heaven and earth, the material frame of the visible world, with all its parts compacted together in so fair, so fit, so firm and stable an order, they (as we have sometime sufficiently discoursed) even to natural understanding speak themselves to have been produced by a most wise, most powerful, most beneficent author, that is, by God; the which is confirmed by innumerable testimonies of holy

writ, so evident and obvious, that we need not to cite them: and to thus much the generality of mankind hath always consented; as also the most and best reputed philosophers did in general terms avow it, acknowleging God the Author and Builder of the world.

But there is one particular, wherein they seem unanimously to have dissented from what Christian piety inclines us to acknowlege, as most suitable to the Divine perfection and majesty; which concerns the origin of that matter, of which corporeal things do subsist. For even Plato himself, who so positively doth assert the world to have been framed by God, is yet conceived (I speak so dubiously, because his writings about this point are somewhat obscure, and, as Justin Martyr proves, inconsistent with themselves) to suppose the matter of things to be eternal: he ascribing only to God the forming and disposing it into a good order, answerable to some patterns preexistent in his wise understanding; even as a good artist doth out of an unshapen lump of stuff frame a handsome piece of work, conformable to some idea (or image) preconceived in his fancy; so that he represents God, rather as a builder out of prepared materials, than as a Creator of the world. 'Socrates and Plato,' saith Plutarch, 'did suppose three principles of things, God, matter, ideas: God is the mind; matter the first subject of generation and corruption; idea an incorporeal subsistence in the conceptions of God.' Anaxagoras also, as the same author (and Aristotle before him) telleth us, did assert two principles; the one passive, the matter, consisting of an infinite number of small particles like to one another in shape; the other active, understanding, which ranged those troops of little bodies into order: to the same effects Pythagoras his conceits, though expressed with much obscurity, are reduced. Thales his opinion was in effect the same, who, as Cicero telleth us, 'said, that water was the principle of things, and God that mind, which fashioned all things out of water.' The Stoics also were of the same opinion: 'It seems to them,' saith Laertius in Zeno's life, 'that there are two principles of all things, the agent, and the patient; that the patient is the matter void of qualities, but the agent, reason, which is therein, that is, God.' Tertullian against Hermogenes saith, that 'he did take

from the Stoics to place matter with God; which matter did always exist, being neither born nor made, and nowise having either beginning or end, out of which afterward the Lord made all things:' and, 'Come now,' saith the same Father in his book against the Valentinians, 'let the Pythagoreans learn, let the Stoics acknowlege, and even Plato himself, whence matter, whom they would have unmade, did draw its both origin and substance toward all this structure of the world.' Yea, Aristotle tells us, that generally all natural philosophers before him did conceive, and did assume it for a principle, that nothing was made out of nothing, or that every thing produced had necessarily some preexistent matter, out of which it was produced: 'It is,' saith he, 'the common opinion of naturalists, that nothing can be made out of nothing;' and, 'That it is impossible that any thing should proceed from nothing, all that have studied about nature do consent:'* which principle Aristotle himself not only admits, but extends farther, affirming it impossible that any thing should be produced out of matter not predisposed to admit the form which is to be produced; οὐδὲ γίνεται ὅτι οὖν ἐξ ὅτου οὖν, 'Neither can,' saith he, 'every thing be made of every thing, but out of some subject fitted thereto, (or susceptive thereof,) as animals, and plants out of their seed.'† Which principles deduced from the observing natural effects, or works of art performed always by alterations, additions, subtractions, or transpositions of some matter subjacent, we may safely, in respect only to such kinds of effects, proceeding in the ordinary course of nature, admit; allowing no natural agent, no created artificer, sufficient to produce any thing without some matter or subject aptly qualified and prepared to receive its influence; but from hence to conclude universally, that every action possible doth require a matter pre-existent, or a predisposed subject, is nowise reasonable: because such a thing doth not usually according to the course of nature happen; because there is no cause obvious that can perform so much; because we are not acquainted with the manner of way of doing

* Phys. i. 4. 8. Vid. de Gener. et Corrup. i. 3. et Metaph. i. 1. 3.

† Phys. i. 8.

such a thing, that therefore the thing is in itself absolutely impossible, is no warrantable argumentation: no logic will allow us from particular experiments to establish general conclusions, especially such as do concern the determination of what is absolutely impossible; that must be fetched from abstracted notions of reason, not from singular appearances to sense: there may be, for all that we (we pitifully shortsighted creatures in this our dark state) can by any means know, agents of another sort, and powers in manner of efficacy much differing from all those which come within the narrow compass of our observation. Especially to imagine that the Supreme Being, who made the world in a manner, whatever that manner were, incomprehensible, cannot himself act otherwise than we see these inferior things (not only infinitely lower in degree, but wholly different in nature) do act, is grossly vain and unreasonable: 'It is impossible,' saith St. Chrysostom well, 'for man's nature by curious inquiry to penetrate the workmanship of God.' From sense or experience then such conclusions cannot well be derived; it assures us that some effects are possible, but cannot help us to determine what is impossible. Neither are there any certain principles of reason, from whence it may be collected that it is impossible that some substances should be totally produced *de novo*, or receive completely an existence which they had not before: that no such principles are innate to our minds, (if indeed there be at all any innate principles, which some philosophers deny,) every man's experience can tell him: neither do these philosophers allege any such; nor (as we before showed) can any such be drawn from experience. If they say the proposition is *αὐτόπιστος*, or evidently credible of itself, without any proof, it is a precarious and groundless assertion; such as ought not to be admitted in any science, or any disceptation; except they can show that the terms of these propositions, (or of the like equivalent ones,) A substance is producible altogether *de novo*; A substance may exist, which did not exist; Something may be produced out of nothing; do involve a contradiction; which it rather is evident they do not, there being nothing contained in the notion of substance inconsistent with such a producibility, or with novity of existence, no more than there is in the notion of figure or of motion, which

things no man hardly denies to receive a new existence. In fine, nothing is more reasonable than to confess that our reason can nowise reach the extent of all powers and all possibilities; and that we much, as St. Chrysostom speaks, do transgress our measures and bounds, if we pretend to know what things God is able to produce, or how he doth produce any: 'His works,' as Lactantius speaketh, 'are seen with eyes; but how he made them, the mind itself cannot see.' Those opinions therefore of the ancient philosophers, that the matter of the world (or of natural things) was eternal and necessarily preexistent, and that there could be no creation out of nothing, were assumed altogether without any clear or sure foundation. We may say unto them, as our Lord did once say to the Sadducees, 'Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.' 'The poverty and narrowness of man's natural understanding, (not going usually beyond matters obvious to sense) and their inability, by the meanness of their reason, to look up to the height of truth, did,' as St. Basil says, 'deceive them.'* And that these opinions (revived and embraced by divers persons in our days) are false, and contrary to our faith, that in truth all the matter of things both could be, and really was, created by God, may from several reasons appear.

1. It is often in general terms affirmed in Scripture, that God did make all things; all things in heaven and earth. Now it is unsafe, and never without urgent reason allowable, to make limitations or restrictions of universal propositions, especially of such as are frequently and constantly thus set down: and, like as St. Paul somewhere discourses, because it is said in the prophets, 'Every one that believeth in him shall not be ashamed;' and, 'Whosoever shall call on the Lord shall be saved;' therefore both Jews and Greeks, in case of their belief and invocation of God, are capable of acceptance and salvation; οὐ γάρ ἐστι διαστολή, for that there is no distinction or exception made: so it being said universally and unlimitedly, that all things were made, and no reason appearing which compels to restrain that universality, therefore the matter of things was also made; the matter being one thing, yea

* Bas. Hexaem. Hom. β.

in the opinion of most philosophers, as well ancient as modern, the principal thing, the only substantial thing in nature; all other things being only modes, affections, or relations thereof. Whence Aristotle telleth us that most of the first philosophers did affirm nothing at all really to be made, and nothing ever to be destroyed; because matter did always subsist and abide the same, as if no other thing beside in nature had any being considerable. If God therefore did not produce matter itself, he could hardly be accounted author of any thing in nature, so far would he be from being truly affirmed the maker of all things: on this ground Cicero, as Lactantius cites him, denied that God was the author of any of the elements: 'It is not probable,' said he, 'that the matter, whence all things did arise, was made by divine Providence;' and, 'If matter was not made by God, then neither earth, nor water, nor air, nor fire, were made by him;'* to invert which discourse, we say that God did make all these things, (earth, sea, fire, and air,) as the holy Scripture frequently asserts, wherefore the matter of them was also his work: he was not only, as St. Basil speaks, 'an inventor of figures,' (or a raiser of motions,) 'but the maker of nature itself;'† and of all that is substantial therein.

2. Again, God is in Scripture affirmed to be the true proprietary and possessor of all things, none excepted; how so, if he did not make them? for 'he that did not make, cannot,' as Justin Martyr argues, 'have any right to that which is not made.'‡ It is the argument by which the Scripture frequently proves God to be the owner and disposer of things, because he made them: 'The earth,' saith the psalmist, 'is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein: for he hath founded it on the seas, and prepared it on the floods.' So, because (we may say) he did produce matter, and doth sustain its being; therefore he, by the most excellent sort, and on the best ground of right, doth own it, and may justly use it at his pleasure; otherwise might we not say with Tertullian, 'If God did not make matter, he using a thing not

* Cic. apud Lactant. ii. pag. 150. † Bas. Hex. β.
‡ Just. M. Cohort. ad Gr. i. p. 22.

his own, because not made by him, either he used it precariously, as needing it, or injuriously, as usurping on it by force.'*

3. The supposing any thing to be eternal, uncreated, and independent on God, doth advance that being in those respects unto an equality with God, imparting thereto so great and divine attributes: 'It will become,' as St. Basil saith, 'God's peer, or equal in dignity, being dignified with the same privileges.' That supposition likewise in effect depriveth God of those special perfections, independency and all-sufficiency; making him in his operations and performances to depend on, and to be in a manner subject unto, matter; to need its concourse, and to be unable to perform any thing farther than it admits: for, 'None,' as Tertullian discourseth, 'is free from needing that, whose stock he useth; none is exempt from subjection to that, which he needs that he may use; and none who lends of his own to use, is not in this superior to him, to whom he lends it for use.'† The very doubting about this made Seneca put such absurd and impious questions as these: How God's power is limited? whether he effects whatever he pleaseth, or is disappointed by want of matter? whether he doth not form many things ill, not from defect of art in himself, but from disobedience of the subject-matter?‡ Which questions we easily resolve by saying, nothing is impossible to God; his will can never be crossed or disappointed; he can never do any thing bad, or imperfect in its kind; because he createth matter itself answerable to his design.

4. As Aristotle well discoursed against the ancient philosophers, who, before Anaxagoras, did assign but one principle of things, a material and passive one, as if no active principle were required; so may we argue against him and them together. If God did produce and insert an active principle into nature, (as who can imagine those admirable works of nature, the seminal propagation and nutrition of plants, and however more especially the generation, motion, sense, fancy, appetite, passion of animals, to be accomplished by a mere passive agitation of matter, without some active principle distinct from

* Adv. Hermog. 2. † Ibid, iv. 5. ‡ Sen. Præf. Nat. Qu.

matter, which disposeth and determineth it to the production of such effects?) if God could, I say, produce and insert such an active principle, (such an ἐντελέχεια, as the philosopher calleth it,) why might he not as well produce a passive one, such as the matter is? what greater difficulty could he find in doing it?

5. Yea farther, if God hath produced immaterial beings, or simple and uncompounded substances distinct from matter, such as angels and the souls of men, merely out of nothing, (for out of what preexistent stuff could they be made?) then may he as well create matter out of nothing; for what greater difficulty can we conceive in creating so much lower and more imperfect a thing, than in creating those more excellent substances, so much fuller, as it were, of entity, or so far more removed from nothing? If any one thing is producible out of nothing, why may not all things capable of existence be so produced by a competent and omnipotent virtue? 'Why not,' as Tertullian argued, 'all things out of nothing, if any thing out of nothing; except if the divine virtue, which drew somewhat out of nothing, was insufficient to produce all things thence?'* But that such immaterial substances were produced by God, we before, from many plain testimonies of Divine revelation, did show: and particularly the souls of men are produced from God's breath, or by the efficacy of his word.

6. The manner of God's making the world, expressed in Scripture, by mere will and command, ('He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;' 'he commanded, and they were created,') that only by uttering the word *fiat*, (not audibly, but mentally, that is, by an act of volition,) all things should be formed and constituted in their specifical natures and perfections, doth argue that matter, or any other thing possible, might easily by the divine power be produced out of nothing. Likewise effecting miracles superior or contrary to the law and course of nature, without any preparatory dispositions induced into the suscipient matter, in the same manner, by mere willing, saying, or commanding, whereof there be in the Scripture frequent instances, doth persuade the same; θέλω, καθαρίσθητι, 'I will; be thou cleansed:'

* Adv. Herm. 15.

'Woman, great is thy faith, γενηθήτω σοι, ὡς θέλεις· be it to thee, as thou desirest:' νεανίσκε, σοὶ λέγω, ἐγέρθητι, 'Young man, I say to thee, Wake,' from the sleep of death: so did our Saviour speak, and the effect immediately followed; whereby, as he demonstrated his divine power, so he declared the manner whereby divine power doth incomprehensibly operate in the production of things; and that it therein nowise dependeth on matter: for it is nowise harder or more impossible to produce matter itself, than to produce a form therein without or against an aptitude to receive it: nay, it seemeth more difficult 'to raise children unto Abraham out of stones,' than to draw them out of nothing; there being a positive obstacle to be removed, here no apparent resistance; there as well somewhat preceding to be destroyed, as somewhat new to be produced, here only somewhat simply to be produced: especially considering, as we said, that God useth no other means, instruments, or applications in these productions, than his bare word or command; which there is no reason why we should not conceive as able immediately to make the matter, as to produce the forms of things.

7. Lastly; the holy text, describing the manner and order of the creation, doth insinuate this truth. 'The Scripture,' saith Tertullian well, 'doth first pronounce the earth to be made, then setteth out its quality; as likewise first professing the heaven made, it in the sequel doth superinduce its disposition.'* 'In the beginning,' saith Moses, 'God made heaven and earth; now the earth was without form;' that is, it seems, God at first did make the matter of heaven and earth devoid of all form and order, a confused and unshapen mass; then he digested and distinguished the parts of them, by several steps, orderly raising thence all those various kinds, and well arrayed hosts of goodly creatures: first he made the stones and timber, and all requisite materials, then did he rear and frame this stately fabric. So the words do sound, and may well be understood.

From these premises we may conclude against those philosophers, who, destitute of the light of revelation, did conceit

* Contra Hermog. 26.

otherwise, and against those Christians who have followed the philosophers, (as Hermogenes of old, and Volkelius of late, together with the sectators of their opinions,) that God did create, (in the most strict and scholastical sense of that word, did create,) that is, either immediately or mediately did produce out of nothing, or did bestow intirely a new existence unto every thing, which is, not excepting any one; and that is the sense of the words, having 'made heaven and earth;' or of the title, 'Maker of heaven and earth,' ascribed unto God.

Which title as all sober Christians have always acknowleged, and the holy oracles do most plainly avouch, due to the one true God alone, (for, 'to us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things,') so there were divers heretics of old, Marcion and others of the Gnostic crew, who contradicted it; affirming that the God of the Old Testament, who made the world and enacted the ancient Law, whom Moses and the Prophets did declare was not the same God with him from whom the gospel proceeded, and who is preached therein; the Mosaic God being a worse conditioned God, fierce and rigid, angry and implacable, delighting in wars and mischiefs; but the evangelical God, the Father of our Lord, being mild and gentle; void of all wrath and spleen; very indulgent and beneficent. Of kin to that fancy of Marcion was the error of the Manichees, who supposed two first causes of things; from one whereof good, from the other evil, did fatally proceed; which conceit, it seems, they drew from the Persian, Egyptian, or other ethnical doctrines; the which we have recited by Plutarch in his discourse about Isis and Osiris; 'The Persian magi,' said he, 'had their Oromazes and Arimanius; the Egyptians, their Osiris and Typhon; the Chaldeans, their good and bad planets; the Greeks, their Zeus and Hades; the Pythagoreans, their Monas and Dyas; Empedocles, his Concord and Discord,' &c.* The like report we have in divers other writers: the common reason, or ground, on which these erroneous conceits were built, was this; there appearing to be in nature some things imperfect, and some things bad, (as ill dispositions, inclinations, and passions of mind; ill tempers and diseases of body, attended with pains

* Plut. de Iside et Osiride, &c.

and troubles in life; vices, discords, deformities, antipathies, irregularities, monsters, poisons, and the like things dispersed in nature,) this sort of things they supposed could not proceed from perfect goodness, the fountain of what was good, lovely, orderly, convenient, pleasant, and desirable: 'If (discourseth Plutarch, expressing the main of their argument) nothing can naturally arise without a cause, and good cannot afford causality to evil, it is necessary that nature should have a proper seed and principle of evil as well as good: and thus it seems to the most and wisest; for they indeed conceive two gods as it were counterplotting each other; one the contriver and producer of good things, and the other of bad; calling the better one God; the other, Dæmon.'* But this discourse hath two faulty suppositions: it supposeth some things to be imperfect and evil, which are not truly such; and to those things, which are truly such, it assigneth an imaginary and wrong cause.

1. It supposeth some beings according to their original nature and constitution to be evil and imperfect; which supposition is, I say, false; for there is no sort of creature, which did not at first pass the Divine approbation: 'God saw every thing which he had made, and behold it was very good:' good, that is, convenient and suitable to its design, (or its Author's idea,) fair and decent in its place, according to its proportion; very good, that is, perfect and complete in its degree, without any defect, blemish, or flaw; not liable to any reasonable blame or exception. There are indeed among the creatures some degrees of perfection, (it was fit there should be so in great variety, that things might by comparison illustrate and commend one another; that there might be regular subordinations, and subserviencies, and harmonies; that several faculties of intelligent creatures might be exercised, and improved, and delighted; that the πολυποίκιλος σοφία, the manifold, or multiform, wisdom of the Creator might be displayed, acknowleged, and celebrated; there are, I say, for such purposes in nature creatures gradually different in excellency,) whence some things may be said comparatively imperfect, or rather less excellent and noble in respect to other things, endued with higher faculties, or (as they be sometimes called) perfections of nature; some things

* De Is. et Osir.

are less active, and more passive than others; are not so capable of enjoyments delectable unto, and more subject to impressions distasteful to, their particular nature; which passivities and displeasures are not simply wills, because they do suit the degree of the particular natures of those subjects, being also ever overbalanced with other pleasing activities and enjoyments: so have things different measures of excellency; but nothing, as it comes from God's hand, or stands in its rank in nature, is positively imperfect, or void of that perfection which is due to its kind; much less is any creature absolutely bad, that is, ugly, or noxious, or troublesome, or cumbersome to the universe; so that it were better away out of it, than in it. 'God,' saith the Hebrew Wise Man, 'created all things, that they might have their being, and the generations of the world were healthful, and there is no poison of destruction in them.' Every thing contributes somewhat to the use and benefit, or to the beauty and ornament of the whole: no weed grows out of the earth, no insect creeps on the ground, which hath not its elegancy, and yields not its profit; nothing is abominable or despicable, though all things are not alike amiable and admirable: there is therefore nothing in all the compass of nature unfit or unworthy to have proceeded from God; nothing which he beseemingly, without derogation to his excellencies, may not own for his work; nothing which in its rank and degree doth not confer to the manifestation of his glorious power, admirable wisdom, and excellent goodness: 'O Lord,' (cried the devout psalmist on particular survey and consideration of them,) 'how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.' That which we call poison, is such only relatively, being noxious or destructive to one part, but innocent, wholesome, and useful to some other part; and never prejudicial to the whole body of things: yea, even to that part itself it is commonly beneficial in some case or season; affording, if not continual alimony, yet sometime physic thereto, and serving to expel another poison or mischief more imminently dangerous. That which we call a monster is not unnatural in regard to the whole contexture of causes, but ariseth no less methodically, than any thing most ordinary; and it also hath its good end and use, well serving to illustrate the

beauty and convenience of nature's usual course. As for pain and grief incident to the natures of things; without regard to any demerit or justice, they are not properly evils, but adherences to the less perfect natures of things; in a state liable to which God not only justly, but wisely, according to his pleasure, might constitute things, for the reasons and ends before insinuated; for no reason obliged him to confer on every thing extreme perfection; he might dispense his liberalities in what kind and measure he thought good. In fine, the reason of offence we take at any thing of this kind, seeming bad or ugly to us, ariseth from our defect of knowlege and sagacity, we not being able to discern the particular tendency of each thing to the common utility and benefit of the world.

2. But as for those real imperfections and evils, truly so called, (which alone, as St. Paul speaketh, 'are properly evil, and most worthy of the appellation of evils,') habitual distempers of soul, and irregular actions; errors, and vices, and sins; we need not search for any one eternal or primitive cause of them: although order, uniformity, beauty, and perfection, do, yet disorder, confusion, deformity, and defect do not, argue any unity of cause whence they should spring; the true causes of them are sufficiently notorious; not the will or power of a Creator, but the wilfulness and impotency of creatures are the fountains of them. They are no substantial beings, and so do not need an infinite power to create them; they do hardly need a positive cause; being themselves rather defects than effects; privations of being, than positive beings: 'Let no man,' saith St. Austin, 'seek an efficient cause of a bad will; for there is no efficient, but a deficient thereof; for that itself is not an effection, but a defection:' and, 'An evil will,' saith he again, 'is the efficient cause of an ill work; an evil will hath no cause;' that is, none beside itself, or its own deficiency. And again: 'Evil hath no nature, but the loss of good hath received the name of evil:' however, most certainly, 'the rise and root of sin is our free will and choice;' it is *κακὸν βλάστημα προαιρέσεως*, as Cyril Hier. saith, 'a bad sprout from our choice.' Men, or other intellectual and free agents, their voluntarily averting themselves from the supreme true good to inferior appearing goods; their wilfully declining from the way which

God doth show and prescribe to them; their rejecting the advice, and disobeying the laws of God; their thwarting the dictates of that reason which God did put in them; their abusing their natural faculties; their perverting and corrupting themselves, and others also, by ill example, persuasion, allurement, violence; these causes of such evils are most visible and palpable: we need not go far, nor rise to the top of things, to find an author on whom we may charge our evils; they are most truly called our ways, our works, our imaginations, our inventions, and devices; they are the children of our affected stupidity and our naughty sloth; of our precipitant choice, of our stubborn will, of our unbridled passion; they are wholly imputed to us; we are blamed, we are condemned, we are punished for them: as it is horrible blasphemy to ascribe them to the most good God, so it is vain to imagine any other necessary principle, any uncreated mischievous Arimanius, any spiteful Cacodæmon, any eternal Fate, to father them on.

The mischiefs also of pain and grief consequent on those distempers and misdemeanors ('that unwilling brood of wilful evils,'* as Damascene calls them) have very discernible originals: they are partly to be imputed to us, and partly attributed to God: we by our faults deserve and draw them to ourselves: God in justice and wisdom doth inflict them on us: *Perditio tua ex te;* 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;' and, 'Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves:' so doth God charge the cause of such evils on us; and, 'Shall there be any evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' 'Doth not evil and good proceed out of the Most High?' 'I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil:' so God assumes the causality of them to himself. We need therefore not to inquire after any other cause of these evlis, (*mala pœnæ,*) so called because they are displeasing to sense or fancy; although considering the needfulness and usefulness of them in respect to public benefit (as they are exemplary and monitive,) and their wholesomeness for particular correction and cure, (for, 'No chastening,' as the Apostle saith, 'for the present seemeth to

* De Orth. F. iv. 20.

be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby,') in such respects they may rather be called good things: however, as they have any thing bad in them, they proceed from us; as they contain somewhat good, they are from God: which sufficiently confuteth those heretical opiniators, and decideth the controversy; it being vain to suppose any other, beside these most apparent causes of such evils: our bad desert and God's just providence. It is considerable that even vice (although the worst thing in the world, and bad to the subject thereof) is yet in some respects useful: it in regard to the whole is not unprofitable; it serveth to the illustration of God's holy attributes; it is a foil to virtue, and setteth off its lustre. But let thus much suffice concerning the objects of the creation.

I shall next touch a consideration or two concerning the manner how, and the reason why, God did make the world; which will commend to us his doing it, and intimate some grounds of duty, and both direct and excite our practice in respect thereto. The manner of God's producing the world was altogether voluntary, and absolutely free; it did not issue from him ἀπροαιρέτως, without counsel or choice, not (as some philosophers have conceited) by natural or necessary emanation or result; as heat from fire, or light from the sun, or shadow from a body; but from a wise free choice: he so made the world, that he could wholly have abstained from making it, that he could have framed it otherwise, according to an infinite variety of ways. He could not be fatally determined, there being no superior cause to guide him, or to constrain him anywise; (to do or not to do; to do thus, or otherwise;) he could not be obliged to impart any perfection, being absolute master of all things possible, and debtor unto none on any account; it is his privilege therefore and property to perform all things κατὰ βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, 'according to the counsel of his will,' or according to his wise pleasure, as St. Paul expresseth it; and accordingly we hear the Elders in the Revelation acknowleging, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, καὶ διὰ τὸ θελημά σου, and for thy will they are and were created:' they do affirm

God's pleasure to be the cause of his creating things, and they imply its being so to be the ground of our due veneration, gratitude, and all devotion; these being tributes due unto free goodness and bounty: if he made all things fatally, no praise or thanks were due to him; if he doeth things so, there is no reason to offer thanks to him, to seek his aid, or implore his favor; no devotion toward him hath a ground, or can subsist. It is also evident, if the world had been produced in way of necessary emanation, that it should have been eternal; as if the sun had been eternal, his light had been eternal also; if fire had been, its heat likewise had been from eternity: but that the world was produced in time, not long since, within six or seven thousand years, not only faith and divine chronology do assure us, but reason also shows, and all history conspires to persuade us; there being no plain monument, or probable memory of actions beyond that time; and by what progressions mankind was propagated over the world; how, and when, and where nations were planted, empires raised, cities built, arts invented or improved, it is not very hard to trace near the original times and places. The world therefore in respect of time conceivable by us is very young, and not many successions of ages, or lives of men, have passed between its beginning and ours; whence it plainly appears that it was freely produced by God.

And how he produced it, the Scripture farther teacheth us. It was not with any laborious care or toil; not with the help of any engines or instruments subservient; not by inducing any preparatory dispositions or aptitudes, but ψιλῷ τῷ βούλεσθαι, by his mere willing, as Clemens Alexandrinus speaks;* his will and word were, as Tertullian expounds it, the hands, by which it is said that God made the heavens; at his call they did all immediately spring up out of nothing; at his command they presently ranged themselves into order: it was not a high strain of rhetoric in Moses, as Longinus deemed, thus to describe the creation, but a most proper expression of that incomprehensible efficacy, which attends the divine will and decree.

But since God did not only make the world freely, but

* Adv. Hermog. 45.

wisely; and since all wise agents act to some purpose, and aim at some end, why (may it be inquired) did God make the world? what impulsive reason or inducement was there moving his will to do it? We may answer with Plato; ἀγαθὸς ἦν, 'He was good; and he that his good, doth not envy any good to any thing:'* his natural benignity and munificence was the pure motive that incited or invited him to this great action of communicating existence and suitable perfection to his creatures, respectively: no benefit or emolument could hence accrue to him; he could receive no accession of beatitude; he did not need any profit or pleasure from without, being full within, rich in all perfection, completely happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of himself. 'Can a man,' can any creature, 'be profitable to God?' No; 'our goodness doth not extend to him;' we cannot anywise advance or amplify him thereby; it is because goodness is freely diffusive and communicative of itself; because love is active and fruitful in beneficence; because highest excellency is void of all envy, selfishness, and tenacity, that the world was produced such as it was; those perfections being intrinsical to God's nature, (for 'God is love,' that is, essentially loving and good,) disposed him to bestow so much of being, beauty, delight, and comfort to his creatures. Hence, 'The earth,' saith the psalmist, 'is full of the goodness of the Lord;' that is, every thing therein, according to its state and degree, is an effect of the divine goodness, partakes thereof both in its being and in its enjoyments; and, 'The Lord,' saith he again, 'is good to all, and his tender mercies (or his bowels of affection) are over all his works:' he is good, and tenderly kind toward all his works, as well in producing them as preserving them; in freely rendering them capable of receiving good, as in carefully providing, and liberally dispensing good unto them; 'That thou givest them (saith the psalmist, speaking with respect to the university of things) they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are all filled with good:' it is from God's open hand (that is, from his unconfined bounty and liberality) that all creatures do receive all that good which fills them; which satisfieth their needs, and satiateth their desires:

* Sen. Ep. 65.

a glimpse of which truth the ancient Pagans seem to have had, when they, as Aristotle observed,* did commonly suppose love to have been the first and chief of the gods; the original source and framer of things. But I will no longer insist on this point in way of doctrine or disquisition; I shall only adjoin a little application.

1. The belief and consideration of this point (that God is the Maker of heaven and earth) must necessarily beget in us highest esteem, admiration, and adoration of God, and his divine excellences, his power, wisdom and goodness: for what a power must that be (how unconceivably great, both intensively and extensively, must it be?) which could so expeditely and easily rear such a stupendously vast frame? vast beyond the reach of our sense, of our imagination, of any rational collection that we can make? the earth, on which we dwell, divided into so many great empires, full of so many inhabitants, bearing such variety of creatures different in kind, having in respect to the whole but the like proportion, as a little sand hath to the earth itself, or a drop of water to the great ocean? What a wisdom must that be, how unconceivably large and penetrant, that could contrive such an innumerable number of creatures, (the artifice which appears in one, in the least of which, doth so far transcend our conceit,) could digest them so fitly, could connect them so firmly in such an order? What a goodness and benignity must it be, (how immense and boundless!) that did extend itself in affection and care, for so many creatures, abundantly providing for the need and comfort of them all! how transcendently glorious is the majesty of him, that was Author of all those beauties and strengths, those splendors and magnificences we do with so much pleasure and so much wonder behold! Well might the devout psalmist and divine prophet hence frequently take occasion of exciting us to praise and celebrate the perfections of God: well might even heathen philosophers from contemplation of the world be raised into fits of composing hymns and elogies of its great Maker.

2. This consideration likewise may confer to the breeding of

* Metaph. i. 4.

hearty gratitude and humble affection toward God; for that we are on many accounts very nearly and highly concerned in this great production. We ourselves, whatever we are, and all we have, and all we enjoy; all our intrinsical endowments, and all our extrinsical accommodations are parts thereof, and did proceed from God; yea, all the whole frame was designed by him with a particular regard, and from an especial good-will unto us; was fitted for our enjoyment and use: the world was made as a convenient house for us to dwell in, as a pleasant theatre for us to view, as a profitable school for our instruction, as a holy temple for us to perform offices of no less sweet than reasonable devotion; for our benefit those huge orbs roll incessantly, diffusing their glorious light, and dispensing their kindly influences; for our sake the earth is decked with all that goodly furniture, and stored with all that abundance of comfortable provisions: all these things out of pure benevolence, not being moved with any desert of ours, not regarding any profit of his own, before any desire or any thought of ours (before we were capable of wishing or thinking) God was pleased to contrive, and to accomplish for us. 'We,' said a philosopher, 'regard and esteem ourselves overmuch, if we think ourselves worthy, that so great matters should be agitated for our sake:'* and the psalmist signifies the same, when, on contemplation of the world, he saith, 'When I consider the heavens, the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?' That the Author of so great and glorious a work should vouchsafe to regard so mean things as us, to visit us continually with a provident inspection and care over our welfare, to lay so vast projects, and accomplish so mighty works in regard to us; what a demonstration of admirable condescension, what a ground of wonder and astonishment, what an argument of love and thankfulness toward God is this!

3. Yea what a ground and motive to humility should this consideration be unto us! What is man? what, I say, is man, in comparison to him that made the world? what is our strength, what our wit, what our goodness, what any quality or

* Sen. de Ira, 27.

ability of ours, in respect to the perfection of those things in him? how weak, silly, narrow, poor and wretched things must we needs appear to ourselves, when seriously we consider the immense excellences displayed in the world's creation! how should this depress and debase us in our conceits about ourselves! Especially if we reflect on our own unprofitableness, our ingratitude, and our injustice toward our Creator; how none, or how scant returns we have made to him, who gave unto us, and to all things for us, our being and theirs, our all and theirs; how faint in our acknowlegements, how negligent in our services we have been; yea how preposterously, instead of our due homage and tribute, we have repaid him affronts and injuries; frequently opposing his will, and abusing his goodness!

4. This consideration is farther a proper inducement unto trust and hope in God; and withal a fit ground of consolation to us in all our needs and distresses. He that was able to do so great things, and hath been willing to do so much for us; he that having made all things, can dispose of all, and 'doeth (as king Nebuchadnezzar, taught by experience, confessed) according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' how can we distrust his protection or succor in our exigencies? This consideration good men have been wont to apply to such purposes: 'My help,' saith the psalmist, 'cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth:' well might he be assured, having so potent and faithful an aid: and, 'Happy,' saith he again, 'is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth; the sea, and all that therein is:' happy indeed he surely is; no disappointment or disaster can befall him, who doth with reason confide in him that made the world, and can manage it to his advantage. The prophet Jeremiah begins his prayer thus: 'O Lord God, behold, thou hast made heaven and earth by thy great power and stretched out arm; and there is nothing too hard for thee.' The creation of the world is such an experiment of God's power and goodness, as may support our faith in all encounters; so that we should not think any thing so difficult, but

that God is able; nor so high, but that God is willing to perform for us, if it make toward our real good.

5. Finally, this consideration ministereth a general incitement unto all obedience; which from God's production of all things doth appear, on several accounts, due and reasonable; all other things do constantly obey the law imposed on them, insist in the course defined to them; and shall we only be disobedient and refractory, irregular and exorbitant? shall all the hosts of heaven most readily and punctually obey God's summons? shall 'the pillars of heaven tremble, and be astonished at his reproof?' shall 'the sea, with its proud waves' be curbed and confined by his decree? shall 'fire and hail, snow and vapor, and stormy winds, (such rude and boisterous things,) fulfil his word?' as they are all said to do; and shall we be unruly and rebellious? we, who are placed in the top of nature, from whom all nature was made, to whom all nature serves; shall we only, of all things in nature, transgress against the Author and Governor of nature?

But I leave the farther improvement of this grand point to your meditation, concluding with the exhortation of that angel in the Apocalypse: 'Fear God, and give glory to him; worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water:' even to him be all obedience, and adoration, and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XIII.

EPHESIANS, CHAP I.—VERSE 13.

THAT our religion is true and agreeable to reason, is a ground on which the truth of its single doctrines and articles of faith leans: it is therefore requisite that we be well assured thereof. In the words of the text St. Paul styles the Christian doctrine, as elsewhere, *the word of truth*, and *the gospel of our salvation*, that is, a most true doctrine, brought from heaven to secure our eternal happiness.

It was anciently objected by Celsus and others, that Christianity exacted a bare groundless faith, or imposed laws uncapable of proof; debarring all inquiries, &c.

This mistake arose from their not distinguishing that belief, whereby we embrace Christianity itself in the gross, from that whereby, consequently on the former, we assent to the particular doctrines thereof. For as to the first kind, so far from obstructing inquiry, it obliges men to it; it refuses ordinarily a precipitate assent, and provokes a fair trial: it inveigles no man; but proclaims to all men, *examine all things; hold fast that which is good.*

Indeed, after it hath convinced men of its truth in general, it then requires a full and cordial assent to its particular doctrines: the propriety of this fully shown.

This proceeding, proper to Christianity, is in itself very plausible, &c. The first principle of Christianity (common to it and to all religions) is, that there is one God, Maker and Governor of all things. The next (which no religion denies) is, that God is perfectly veracious, so that whatever appears to

be asserted by him, is certainly true. A third is, that God is the Author of the Christian doctrine and law; that he hath revealed this doctrine to mankind, and confirmed it by his testimony; that he hath imposed this law on us, and established it by his authority. This principle (the foundation of our faith) involves matter of fact, and consequently requires a rational probation. This then is to be shown by several steps or degrees.

I. It is reasonable to suppose that God should at some time or season fully and clearly reveal unto men the truth concerning himself and them, as they stand related to each other, &c.

It is apparent to common experience, that mankind being left to itself, in such matters, is very insufficient to direct itself, &c. The two only remedies of this ignorance and of its consequent evils, natural light and primitive tradition, did little avail to cure them: this fully shown. The miserable state of mankind under such endurance described.

Hence the necessity of another light to guide men out of this darkness. And is it not reasonable to suppose that God, who is alone able, will also be willing in due time to afford it? Reasons why he would be so disposed, assigned.

1. His goodness. *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* Yea; though it be unnatural, it is yet possible she may; because nature in her is not unalterably constant and the same: but the immutable God cannot so cease to be mindful of, and compassionate toward, his children: this subject enlarged on.

2. Moreover his wisdom enforces the same. God made the world to express his goodness, and to display his glory: and who can be sensible of and promote these, but man? but he who is endued with reason and intelligence, &c.? which purposes would be frustrated, should God for ever suffer men to continue in ignorance, doubt, or mistake concerning himself: this topic dilated on.

3. God's justice also seems not a little to favor it: every

good governor thinks it just to take care that his subjects should understand his pleasure, and be acquainted with his laws, &c.: and is it likely that the sovereign Governor and Judge of all the world should be less equitable in his administration? &c.

4. It might be added, that generally it seems unbecoming the Divine Majesty, that he should endure the world, his kingdom, to continue under a perpetual usurpation and tyranny, &c.

We cannot indeed judge concerning the special circumstances or limits of God's dealing towards man in this particular; or concerning the time when, the manner how, the measure according to which he will dispense any particular revelation of himself. That he should for a while connive at men's ignorance, for various purposes, some plain, and others inscrutable to us, is not strange or unlikely: but that for ever he should leave mankind in so forlorn a condition, in such ignorance, under such a captivity to sin, and subjection to misery, seems not probable; much less can it seem improbable that he hath done it. This may tend to remove all obstruction to belief, and dispose us more readily to admit the reasons for it which follow. So much for the first step of our discourse.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XIII.

OF THE TRUTH AND DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 13.

In whom ye also (trusted), having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

THAT our religion in gross is true and agreeable to reason, is a ground on which the truth of its single doctrines and articles of faith doth lean: it is therefore requisite that it first be well supported, or that we be thoroughly assured thereof. Being therefore engaged at other times to discourse on the particular points of Christian doctrine, which suppose this general one; I shall take occasion collaterally in these exercises to insist on this subject; supposing in those, what in these we shall endeavor to prove; so both avoiding there such grand digressions, or the treating on matters not directly incident; and supplying here what seems necessary or useful there to the confirmation of our faith.

Now in the words I did now read, St. Paul styles the Christian doctrine (and in many other places of Scripture it is also so called) 'the word of truth,' (that is, a most true doctrine,) and 'the gospel of our salvation,' (that is, a message brought from heaven by our Saviour and his Apostles; in which the ways and means of attaining salvation, (that is, of

that best happiness which we are capable of,) the overtures thereof from God, and the conditions in order thereto required from us, are declared.) And that we have reason to entertain it as such, I shall immediately address myself to show.

It was anciently objected by Celsus* and other adversaries of our religion, that Christianity did exact from men ψιλὴν καὶ ἄλογον πίστιν, 'a bare groundless faith;' did impose νόμους ἀναποδείκτους, 'laws uncapable of proof,' (that is, as to the goodness and reasonableness of them;) did inculcate this rule, μὴ ἐξέταζε, ἀλλὰ μόνον πίστευε, 'Do not examine or discuss, but only believe;' that it debarred inquiries and debates about truth, slighted the use and improvement of reason, rejected human learning and wisdom, enjoining men to swallow its dictates, without chewing, or any previous examination concerning the reason and truth of them.

The ground of this accusation was surely a great mistake, arising from their not distinguishing that belief, whereby we embrace Christianity itself in gross, from that belief, whereby in consequence to the former we assent to the particular doctrines thereof: especially to such as concern matters supernatural, or exceeding the reach of our natural understanding to penetrate or comprehend. For as to the first kind, that belief whereby we embrace Christianity itself, as true in the gross; I say, it is nowise required on such terms; our religion doth not obtrude itself on men in the dark, it doth not bid men to put out their eyes, or to shut them close; no, nor even to wink, and then to receive it: it rather obliges them to open their eyes wide, to go into the clearest light; with their best senses to view it thoroughly, before they embrace it. It requires not, yea it refuses, ordinarily, a sudden and precipitate assent; admitting no man (capable of judging and choosing for himself) to the participation thereof, or acknowleging him to be a believer indeed; till (after a competent time and means of instruction) he declares himself to understand it well, and heartily to approve it. Never any religion was so little liable to that censure; none ever so freely exposed itself to a fair trial at the bar of reason; none ever so earnestly invited men to

* Orig. i. pag. 8. 9. Orig. vi. pag. 282.

consider and weigh its pretences; yea, provoked them, for its sake and their own, (at the peril of their souls, and as they tendered their own best good and safety,) to an *ενγνώμων, ἐξέτασις*, an equal and discreet examination thereof. Other religions have for their justification insisted on the examples of ancestors, the prescriptions and customs of times, their large extent and prevalence among multitudes of people, their establishment by civil laws, and countenance of secular powers, (arguments wholly extrinsecal and of small validity,) declining all other test or trial of reason: yea, it is remarkable how Celsus, and others who made the foresaid objection, did contradict and confute themselves, affirming men ought without scruple to conform in opinion and practice to the religion prescribed by the laws of their country, be they what they will, never so absurd or dishonest. *Δεῖ φυλάσσειν τὰ εἰς κοινὸν κεκυρωμένα*, (things established by common authority must be observed:) and, *τὰ παρ' ἑκάστοις ὀρθῶς ἂν πράττοιτο ταύτῃ δρώμενα, ὅπῃ ἐκείνοις φίλον*, (things are every where rightly done, being done according to the fashion of each place.) Such were the rules and maxims those men urged. And this was indeed exacting irrational belief; a stifling men's reason, and *muzzling* their judgments; this was a method enforcing men blindly to yield consent to errors and inconsistences innumerable. But the teachers and maintainers of Christianity proceeded otherwise; confiding in the pure merit of their cause, they warned men to lay aside all prejudices; to use their best understandings; in a case of such moment, to apply themselves to an industrious and impartial search of the truth: let one for the rest speak their sense: *Oportet in ea re maxime, in qua vitæ ratio versatur, sibi quemque confidere, suoque judicio ac propriis sensibus niti ad investigandam et perpendendam veritatem, quam credentem alienis erroribus decipi tanquam ipsum rationis expertem: dedit omnibus Deus pro virili portione sapientiam, ut et inaudita investigare possent, et audita perpendere:* 'We ought especially,' says he, 'every one of us in that matter, which chiefly concerns our manner of life, to confide in ourselves; and rather with our own judgment and our proper senses strive to find out and judge of the truth, than believing other men's errors to be deceived, like things void of reason:

God hath given all men a competent share of wisdom that they might both search out things not told them, and weigh what they hear.' So especially just and candid was Christianity in its first offering itself to the minds of men. It propounds indeed and presses, as evident in itself, the worth and consequence of the matter; but refers the decision on either part (so far as concerns every particular man) to the verdict of that reason and conscience, with which to such purposes God hath indued every man. And that it can proceed no otherwise appears farther, from the nature of that faith it requires: it commends faith as a great virtue, and therefore supposes it both voluntary and reasonable; it promises ample rewards thereto, and so implies it a work not of necessity or chance, but of care and industry; it declares infidelity to be very blamable, and threatens severe punishment thereto; why? because it signifies irrational negligence or perverseness.

In fine, Christianity doth not inveigle any man by sleight, nor compel him by force, (being indeed commonly destitute of those advantages; nor being able to use them, if it would,) but fairly by reason persuades him to embrace it; it doth not therefore shun examination, nor disclaim the judgment of reason; but earnestly seeks and procures the one, cheerfully and confidently appeals to the other. 'Examine all things; hold fast that which is good.' 'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.' 'See that no man deceive you.' 'Be always ready, with meekness and respect, to give to every one that demands it of you an account of the hope in you.' These are the maxims which Christianity goes on in the propagation and maintenance of itself.

Indeed after it hath convinced men of its truth in general, having evidenced the truth of its fundamental principles, it then requires a full and cordial assent, without exception, to its particular doctrines, grounded on or deduced from them. When, I say, it hath, to the satisfaction of a man's mind, with solid reason made good its principles, it then enjoins men to surcease farther scruple or debate concerning what it teaches or draws from them; which is a proceeding most reasonable and conformable to the method used in the strictest sciences: for the principles of any science being either demonstrated out of some

higher science, or evidenced by fit experiments to common sense; and being thence granted and received, it is afterward unlawful and absurd to challenge the conclusions collected from them; so if it have been proved and acknowleged that our principles are true, (for instance, that God is perfectly veracious, and that Christian religion hath his authority or attestation to it,) it will then be a part of absurd levity and inconsistency to question any particular proposition evidently contained therein; and in this sense or in these cases it is true indeed that Christianity doth engage us to believe simply and purely, doth silence natural reason, and condemn curious inquiry, and prohibit dispute, especially to persons of meaner capacities or improvements. And thus, I take it, those Christians of old were to be understood, who so much commended immediate faith, excluded reason from being too busy in matters of religion, discountenanced that curiosity which searched into, and would needs sound, those inscrutable mysteries which our religion teaches. Our religion then will allow (yea it invites and exhorts) an infidel to consider and judge of its truth, although it will not allow a Christian to be so vain and inconstant as to doubt of any particular doctrine therein; seeing by so questioning a part, he in effect renounces the whole, and subverts the foundation of his faith; at least ceases thereby to be a steady Christian. I might then well invert our adversaries' discourse, and offer it as a good argument of our religion its truth, that it alone among all religions, with a candor and confidence peculiar to truth, calls us to the light, is willing, yea desirous, to undergo trial; I add, yea challenges, as its due from all men, and demands it of them as a necessary duty to hear it, to consider it seriously, to pass sentence on it; for as commonly error and groundless conceit, being conscious of their own weakness, are timorous and suspicious, and thence ready to decline all proof and conflict of reason; so truth, knowing its own strength, is daring and resolute; enters boldly into the lists, being well assured (or hopeful) of good success in the combat.

Which proceeding, proper to Christianity, is in itself very plausible, and may well beget a favorable prejudice on its side; and that it is not confident without reason will appear on

our examining the principles and grounds on which it stands. The first principle of Christianity (common thereto and all other religions) is, that there is one God, (sovereign and transcendent in all perfections, the Maker and Governor of all things.) The next (which also no religion doth not acknowlege) is, that God is perfectly veracious, so that whatever appears to be asserted or attested to by him, is certainly true; which principles (by reasons I hope proper and sufficient) I partly have proved, and partly shall hereafter on occasion show. A third is, that God is the author of the Christian doctrine and law; that he hath revealed this doctrine to mankind, and confirmed it by his testimony; that he hath imposed this law on us, and established it by his authority. This principle (being the foundation and sum of our faith) involves matter of fact; and consequently being not evident immediately in itself, doth (for a full conviction of a man's mind, and producing therein a solid persuasion) require a rational probation; and that it may appear we believe it like reasonable men, not (as Pagans and Mahometans, and those of other sects do,) on wilful resolution or by mere chance, as also for settling the ground of particular articles comprehended under this, I shall endeavor to show the reasonableness thereof; advancing my discourse by several steps and degrees. I observe first, that,

I. It is reasonable to suppose that God should at some time or season fully and clearly reveal unto men the truth concerning himself and concerning them, as he and they stand related to each other; concerning his nature and will, concerning our state and duty, respectively: the nature and attributes of God, the nature and qualities of man, being compared, do persuade thus much.

It is apparent to common experience that mankind being left to itself (especially in matters of this kind) is very insufficient to direct itself; that it is apt to lie under woful ignorance, to wander in uncertainty, to fall into error, to possess itself with vain conceit, to be abused with any sort of delusion, which either the malice of wicked spirits, or the subtilty of naughty men, or the wildness of its own fond passions and desires can put on it or bring it under; it is consequently exposed to all those vices, dishonorable, hurtful, and destructive to its nature;

and to all those miseries, which from ignorance or error, from vice and wickedness, do naturally spring; especially to an estrangement from God, and an incapacity of his love and favor. The two only remedies of all these mischiefs, natural light and primitive tradition, how little they did avail to cure them; how the one was too faint in itself, and easily lost in mists of prejudice from ill education and bad custom, prevailing generally; how the other (besides its other defects) soon was polluted, and indeed quite spoiled by adulterate mixtures of fond, impure, and vile superstitions, woful experience doth more than enough evince. We see that not only the generality of mankind did sometime lie in this sad condition, but that even the most elevated and refined wits (those among men who by all possible improvement of their reason did endeavor to raise themselves from this low estate; to rescue their minds from the common ignorance, the mistakes, the superstitions and follies of the world) could by no means in any good measure attain those ends; for what did their earnest inquiries or their restless studies produce, but dissatisfaction and perplexity of mind? wherein did their eager disputations conclude, but in irreconcilable differences of opinion, and greater uncertainties than were when they began? Most were plunged into a desperate scepticism, (a doubt and diffidence of all things;) none arrived higher than some faint conjectures on some unsteady opinions concerning those matters of highest consequence; such notions as were not effectual enough to produce in them a practice, in any good measure, suitable to the dignity of man's nature, to the duty he owes to God, to the capacities man hath of doing and receiving good; from which due glory to God or much benefit to man did accrue. Ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς, 'they were made vain' (or, they were frustrated, deluded, befooled) in their reasonings and disputes; the result of their busy speculations was, that 'their foolish heart was darkened;' so darkened, that with all the light they had, they could not see any thing; at least not clearly discern what chiefly it concerned them to know; 'The world by wisdom (by all the wisdom it could get) did not know God;' did not acquire a requisite measure of knowlege in divine things: did not however know him so as to glorify him; as to thank him for the benefits received from him; as to bring

forth worthy fruits of piety and virtue. So much St. Paul observed of them; and not he alone did observe it, but even themselves were sensible of this their unhappiness; whence so many complaints concerning the blindness and infirmity of man's mind, concerning the obscurity and uncertainty of things, concerning the insuperable difficulty of finding truth, concerning the miserable consequences from these, do occur among them.

Now this being the natural state of men, destitute of divine conduct and assistance; do they not (I pray) greatly need another light to guide them in this darkness, or to bring them out of it; a helpful hand, to free them from these inconveniences? and is it not reasonable to suppose that God, who is alone able, will also be willing in due time to afford it? He, who in nature is most benign and bountiful, most pitiful and gracious; whose goodness fills the earth, and whose mercy is over all his works; he, who bears to man the special relation of a Father, and bears to him a suitable tenderness of affection and good will; he, all whose attributes seem concerned in engaging him on this performance; not only his goodness to instigate him, and his wisdom to direct him, but even his justice in some manner to oblige him thereto.

1. His goodness: 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' Yea; though it is unnatural and unusual, it is yet possible she may, because nature in her is not unalterably constant and the same; but the immutable God cannot so cease to be mindful of, to be compassionate toward, his children. That gracious ear cannot hear mankind groan so dolefully under bitter oppressions; that pitiful eye cannot behold his own dear offspring, the flower of his creation, lying in so comfortless, so remediless distress, without feeling some pity, without being moved to reach some relief; such notes surely cannot be grateful, such spectacles cannot be pleasant to him, nor can he then forbear long to provide means of removing them from his presence. We esteem it want of goodness (yea an effect of very bad disposition) not to direct a bewildered traveller, nor to relieve, if we can, even a stranger fallen into great distress: and if we being in such degree bad, are inclinable to perform such good offices, how much more ready may we suppose him,

who is goodness itself, (goodness infinite and absolute,) to do the like for all mankind, so much needing his guidance and help! He who hath settled our outward estate in so advantageous a posture, who hath made provisions so various and ample for the needs and conveniences (yea for the pleasure) of our bodies, would he have so little care over our better part, and leave our souls so slenderly furnished, letting them pine, as it were, for want of spiritual sustenance? How can we think his good providence defective in so main, so principal a part thereof? Thus doth divine goodness (to my apprehension) very strongly confirm our supposition.

2. And his wisdom enforces the same: God made the world to express his goodness and to display his glory; and his goodness who can be sensible of, his glory who can perceive, who can promote, but man? but he who is endued with reason, enabling him to reflect on the good he feels, to admire the excellency he discovers, to render grateful acknowlegements for the one, to utter acclamations of praise to the other? which purposes yet will be utterly (or at least in great measure) frustrated, should God for ever suffer men to continue in such ignorance, doubt, or mistake concerning himself; if men are not fully persuaded that he made the world and governs it, how can they pay those due homages of dread to his glorious power, of admiration to his excellent wisdom, of love to his transcendent goodness? This grand theatre would, as it were, stand useless, and all the wonders acted thereon would appear in vain, should there be wanting a spectator; should man be altogether blind or heedless; yea man's faculty itself, that his seeing faculty of mind, would signify nothing, were there not a light rendering things visible to him. Common sense hath dictated to men that man is capable of showing respect, of performing duty and service to God, that also God requires and expects them from him; the same declares that God best knows what kind of service, what expressions of respect best please him. Reason tells that God would have man act in the best manner, according to the design of his nature; that he would have the affairs of men proceed in some good order; that he even desires earnestly the good of men, and delights in their happiness: and if so, it is reasonable to suppose that

being most wise he should dispose fit means for accomplishing those ends; for securing himself, as it were, from disappointment; that therefore he should impart to men a competent knowlege of himself, should declare his good-will and pleasure to them, should reveal both the best way of their serving him, and the best means of their attaining happiness to themselves. So divine wisdom grounds an argument for our supposition.

3. God's justice also seems not a little to favor it: every good governor thinks it just to take care that his subjects should understand his pleasure, and be acquainted with his laws; he causes them therefore to be solemnly promulgated, that all may take notice; if any of them by long disuse are become unknown, he revives the knowlege of them by new proclamations; to quicken obedience he propounds fit rewards, and deters from disobedience by menacing suitable punishments, knowing man's nature, resty and unapt to move without these spurs: and is it likely the sovereign Governor and Judge of all the world should observe less equity in his administrations? that he should neglect any means necessary or apt to promote his subjects' performance of their duty, to prevent the breaches of his laws? He that loves righteousness above all, he that so earnestly desires to be duly obeyed, he that infinitely delights in his subjects' good; can he fail sufficiently to declare his will, to encourage men to comply with it, to terrify them from transgressing it? will he suffer his laws to remain unknown or uncertain; will he not consider the infirmities of his subjects, will he leave any fair apology for disobedience? No, the superlative justice of God seems to persuade the contrary.

4. I might add that generally it seems unbecoming the Majesty Divine, that he should endure the world, his kingdom, to continue under a perpetual usurpation and tyranny; to suffer that his imperial throne should be possessed, his authority abused, his name insulted over, by enemies and rebels against him, (by evil spirits, whether those of hell, or those on earth;) that a cruel fiend, that a cursed ghost, that a brute beast, that a chimera of man's fancy should be worshipped, while himself is forgotten and neglected, is dishonored and despised; that iniquity and wickedness (with all the filthy brood of ignorance and error) should every where flourish and domineer, while

righteousness and virtue lie prostrate, and are trampled on: this surely the King of Glory, the great Patron of Goodness, will not permit to be; sooner rather may we conceive that, to remove these indecencies and these mischiefs, he would presently turn the world into a desert and solitude, or pour a deluge of water over the face of the earth, or with flames of vengeance consume it into ashes.

We cannot indeed judge or determine concerning the special circumstances or limits of God's dealing toward man in this particular; concerning the time when, the manner how, the measure according to which, God will dispense those revelations of himself: those depend on mysteries of counsel and wisdom surpassing our comprehension. That God should for a while connive at men's ignorance, and suffer them to grope after divine truth; to try them, as he did the Israelites in the wilderness, how they would behave themselves in that state; to prove how they would use their talent of natural light, to make them sensible of their own infirmity, to show them whence all their welfare must proceed, on whom all their happiness depends, to make them more able to value, more desirous to embrace, the redress vouchsafed them; as also, to demonstrate his own great clemency, longsuffering, and patience; that, I say, for such purposes, and others unsearchable by our shallow understanding, God should for some time forbear with a full evidence to declare all his mind to men, is not so strange or unlikely; but that for ever, through all courses of time, he should leave men in so forlorn a condition, in such a depth of ignorance, such perplexity of doubt, such captivity under sin, such subjection to misery, seems not probable, much less can it seem unprobable that he hath done it: it cannot, I say, in any reason seem misbecoming the goodness, wisdom, or justice of God, clearly to discover to us what he requires us to do, what good he intends for us, what way leads to our happiness, how we may avoid misery. This consideration, if it do not prove peremptorily that God cannot but sometime make such a revelation, nor that he yet hath actually done it, (forasmuch as we cannot reach the utmost possibilities of things, nor are fit judges of what God must necessarily do; although to my apprehension this sort of reasoning, with due caution used, sub-

sisting in general terms, and not over precisely applying it to particular cases, (implicated by circumstances and specialties not falling under our judgment) hath great force;) yet it removes all obstruction to our belief, and disposes us with more readiness to admit the reasons which follow: for it being not unprobable, yea, according to the reason of the thing, very probable that he should do it, we have cause with attention and expectation of success on this hand to regard the arguments that pretend to prove he hath done it.

This is the first step of our discourse, at which we shall stop for the present.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XIV.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 13.

THAT the Christian doctrine is what St. Paul here calls it, *the word of truth*, is our proposition to be verified: to which purpose it has been already shown how very probable it is that God should sometime clearly and fully reveal his mind to men.

II. We now proceed another step, and assert that no other revelation of that kind and importance hath been made; that no other religion can with good probability pretend to have thus proceeded from God. There have appeared but three pretences to it: that of ancient Paganism; that of Mahometanism; and that of Judaism. These briefly discussed.

For the first, ancient Paganism, it did indeed, (in the parcels thereof, or by retail) pretend to a kind of divine revelation: this shown: but put the whole body of that religion together, and you have nothing but a lump of confusion, deformity, filthiness, and folly, as little tending to the glory of God as to the good of man: the texture and state of it fully dilated on. If any good did appear in the conversation of some men who followed its doctrines, this is not to be imputed to the influence of that religion, but to some better cause, to the relics of a good nature; to the glimmerings of natural light breaking forth, &c. No really wise men among the heathen believed in the divine inspiration of such a religion: opinions of philosophers on this head quoted. Moreover it may be added, that all the Pagan religions vanished together with the countenance

of secular power sustaining them. And this much may suffice to show that Paganism did not proceed from divine authority.

The consideration of this case of the heathens may be of good use in confirming, what has before been urged, the great need of some full and plain revelation to the world of God's mind, &c.; and may serve to discover our great obligations to him.

The pretence just considered was ancient in standing; but there hath, even since Christianity, started up another, (Mahometanism,) which demands notice; for it hath continued a long time, and hath greatly overspread the earth: neither is it more formidable in its looks than peremptory in its words; vaunting itself to be a complete and ultimate declaration of God's will and pleasure, &c. But examining the substance and circumstances thereof, we shall not find it stamped with the genuine characters of divine authority.

In times of great disturbance, confusion, and impiety, in a very obscure corner of the earth, among a crew of wild robbers, &c. this doctrine had its birth and growth; into this sort of people it was insinuated by juggling tricks, or driven by seditious violence: the first author of it had all the marks of an impostor; he was rebellious, perfidious, cruel, lascivious, pretending to enthusiasm and the working of wonders: by him it was proposed to barbarous people, with all the incitements of sensual pleasures.

Afterwards, being furnished with such champions, it diffused itself by rage and terror of arms, convincing men's minds by the sword instead of argument. On the same ground of ignorance and force it still exists; neither offering any reason, nor admitting any examination, &c.

Now that divine wisdom should choose those black and boisterous times to publish his will, is as if a king should purposely order his proclamation to be made in a tempestuous night, when scarcely a man could stir out, or see what was

done, and hear what was said: much fitter surely to that purpose were serene and calm days, a time of general civility and peace, like that of Augustus Cæsar: similar illustration applied to the *place*, and to the *people*. Thus even the exterior circumstances of Mahometanism, belonging to its rise, growth, and continuance, ground strong presumptions against its divinity.

But farther, if we look into the matter and inward frame thereof, we shall find it a mass of absurd opinions, odd stories, and uncouth ceremonies. From Christian *heresies* it seems to have derived its negative doctrines, opposite to Christianity: this explained. The Jew contributed his ceremonies of circumcision, frequent worships, abstinence from swine's flesh, allowance of polygamy and divorce; together perhaps with that proud, inhuman trait of monopolising to itself divine favor and good-will; of despising and hating all the world besides its own disciples, &c. In its notion of God, his nature and attributes, Mahometanism is shown to be very peccant. Also in its description of the state of men after death; both in matter of rewards and punishments.

Farther, how Mahomet was inspired, his stories alone will evince: these dilated on: the same may be said regarding the silly ceremonies which he prescribed. Two more considerations may be added; 1. that whatever is good or plausible in this religion, may reasonably be supposed taken from Christianity, which is the older. 2. This religion, by its own concessions, destroys itself: for it admits Christianity once to have been a true doctrine proceeding from God: but Christianity did ever declare itself to be a general, perpetual, and immutable rule of faith and practice, to the exclusion of all others: this enlarged on. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XIV.

OF THE IMPIETY AND IMPOSTURE OF PAGANISM AND MAHOMETANISM.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 13.

In whom ye also (trusted), having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

THAT the Christian doctrine is what St. Paul here calls it, 'a word of truth,' and did proceed from the God of truth, is the proposition we are endeavoring to verify and persuade. To that purpose we did first discourse, that it is very probable God should sometime clearly and fully reveal his mind to men concerning matters relating to his own glory and service, their good and happiness.

II. I now proceed another step, and assert that no other revelation of that kind and importance hath been made; that no other religion, which hath been or is now in being, can with good probability pretend to have thus proceeded from God; so as by him to have been designed for a general, a perpetual, a complete instruction and obligation of mankind. There have appeared but three pretences thereto; that of ancient Paganism, that of Mahometanism, and that of Judaism, (for the more particular pretensions of enthusiastical impostors have been subordinate either to Christianity itself, or to one of those: and besides having found no considerable progress or continuance in the world, nor countenance, as it were, from Providence,

are not pertinent to this consideration, besides that they are all generally disclaimed;) but that none of those three pretences are well grounded, I shall, examining each briefly, show: (briefly, I say, for I need not insist on them largely, the matter having passed so many good pens, especially that excellent one of Grotius; however, it falling in my way and method, I shall offer what hath concerning it occurred to my thoughts.)

For the first, ancient Paganism; it did indeed (in the parcels thereof, or by retail) pretend to a kind of divine revelation; that it derived its notions and its forms of practice from the direction of invisible powers, given to single persons or places, in several ways, (by immediate apparition, by prophetical inspiration, by significant events or prodigies;) but it did not, nor could pretend to any one uniform revelation from the sovereign God, solemnly delivered and directed to all mankind; which is an argument, not only that those pretended revelations were imperfect and insufficient to the ends propounded, but also false and counterfeit: for we may well suspect those edicts which are clancularly set up in corners, and which run not in the king's name, nor are marked with his royal signature, to have proceeded from impostors or from rebels; especially if the matter of them doth not advance, but depress his authority; doth not promote, but prejudice his interest; doth not comport with, but contravene his pleasure, otherwise declared. And such was the manner, such the matter of those Pagan revelations. Put the whole body of that religion (if I may so call it) together, and you have nothing but a lump of confusion and inconsistency, of deformity and filthiness, of vanity and folly, little as may be therein tending to the reverence of God, or to the good of man; to the promoting virtue and goodness in human conversation, to the breeding love and good-will in men toward one another, to the maintaining justice, peace, and good order in societies; much apt to produce the contrary effects. It was not, I say, ever one simple or uniform, one fixed or constant thing, but, according to difference of place and time, various and mutable; diversely shaped and modelled, according to the fancy and humor, design or interest of the state that allowed it, the priests that managed it, and the people that received it; a plain sign

that (excepting some general scattered notions deduced from ancient tradition) it did wholly proceed from human device, or from a worse cause, the suggestion of evil spirits, abusing the fondness and pravity of men. Survey it, and what shall you find therein but a bundle of idle, ill-contrived, incredible, and inconsistent stories, (arguing nothing of truth or sincerity, little of wit or discretion in those who invented them;) those attended by practices foolish, lewd, and cruel; unworthy of human nature, contrary to common sense and honesty? Their worship (that of the supreme Lord being neglected, &c.) you will see directed towards objects most improper and unbecoming: to the ghosts of dead men; men in their lives (if we may trust the reports of their devoutest adorers) famous for nothing so much as for vicious enormities, for thefts and rapines, for murders and parricides, for horrid lusts, adulteries, rapes, and incests; and such persons, alive or dead, what good or wise man would not rather loathe and despise than worship or respect? to somewhat, though not otherwise, yet in degree of nature, worse than those, even to brute beasts; to the most vile, the most mischievous of them, (dogs, serpents, crocodiles;) to pay veneration unto which, how unspeakably abject a mind doth it argue! Yea they stooped lower, even to creatures inanimate, to the stars and elements, to rivers and trees, and other such things, which we see acting by natural necessity, not yielding any signification of understanding, of sense, of life, in them; which therefore, so far inferior to us in nature, how sottish a baseness was it to adore! nay, they descended to a lower degree, if it may be, of folly, dedicating temples and offering sacrifices to things even void of subsistence, to mere qualities and accidents of things, to the passions of our minds, to the diseases of our bodies, to the accidents of our lives. Who would think any man could be so mad as to reckon impudence, that odious vice; a fever, that troublesome disease; or fortune, (that unaccountable name of nothing, which wise men so little trust, and fools so much complain of,) among things divine and venerable? Can I mention any thing worse than all these, which the degenerate ignorance and naughtiness of man hath crouched to? Yes, (with a folly of all most wretched and deplorable,) they fawned on, they obeyed, they offered their

dearest pledges of life and fortune to the sworn enemies, as of God and goodness, so of their own good and welfare, to the very cursed fiends of hell; whom, if they had not been extremely blind and senseless, by the quality of those rites and mysteries they suggested, (so bloody and cruel, so lewd and foul,) they might easily have detected to be so. Such objects as these was their devotion spent on, to these they paid their respect, in these they reposed their confidence. And was such a religion likely to proceed from God? was it like to produce any glory to him, or any benefit to man? From such thorns, what fruits can we hope should sprout of good life, of sound morality? what piety toward God, what justice, truth, or goodness toward man; what sobriety or purity in themselves, can we expect should arise from such conceits and such practices? Surely no other than those which St. Paul describes in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and in the second of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and St. Peter 1 Ep. iv. 3. which history plainly shows to have been no slanderous imputations on Gentilism. If any good did appear in the conversation of some men who followed that religion, it is not to be imputed to the influence of that, but to some better cause; to the relics of good nature; to the glimmerings of natural light breaking forth in some, and by their precept or example conveyed to others; to the necessary experience concerning the mischiefs of vice and advantages of virtue; or perhaps also to secret whispers and impressions of divine grace on some men's minds, vouchsafed in pity to them, and others whom they might teach or lead into ways somewhat better than those common ones of extreme wickedness and folly: to these, I say, or such causes, all instances of practice in any measure innocent or commendable may rather be ascribed, than to that religion, which was much apter to corrupt and debauch, than to better or civilise men; for with what intention soever they were spoken, there was not much of real calumny in those words of Lucretius,

——————————— sæpius olim
Religio peperit scelerata, atque improba facta.

But it is needless to discourse much against that which hath

no reasonable patron, and which scarce any wise man, when it was in fashion, did seriously think to have had any truth or reality in it. Plato, you know, often inveighs against the inventers of those beastly fables in heathen theology, (on which yet all the economy of their religious practice did depend;) Aristotle* attributes the constitution of those religions to the subtilty of statesmen: there is none of the Fathers, I think, or any other disputer against heathenism, who hath more directly or earnestly oppugned it than Pliny hath.† There was few, or none, of the philosophers, who did not signify his dislike or contempt of the vulgar opinions and practices concerning religion: what Cicero saith of one part, the wiser sort did judge of all: *Tota res est inventa fallaciis aut ad quæstum, aut ad superstitionem, aut ad errorem*, (The whole business was deceitfully forged either for gain, or out of superstition, or from mistake).‡ They did indeed, most or all of them, in their external behavior, comply with common practice, out of a politic discretion, for their safety and quiet sake; but in their inward thoughts and judgments they (as by many passages in their writings doth appear) believed nothing, nor liked any thing in it: they observed those things, as Seneca said, *tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam diis grata*, (not as acceptable to the gods themselves, but as commanded by the laws of their country.) And indeed this dissimulation was so notorious, that even the vulgar discerned it; and therefore seldom the wiser men were reputed among them the most religious, but liable to accusation for impiety; and some of them, ye know, suffered extremities on that score, who could not altogether conceal that contempt, which the vanity of popular superstitions had begotten toward them in their hearts.

I might add, that all those Pagan religions did vanish together with the countenance of secular authority and power sustaining them; which shows plainly enough that they had

* Metaph. xii. 8.

† Lib. ii. cap. 7. Vid. Plut. de superst. p. 291. De Leg. x. &c. De Div. ii. p. 240. Tusc. ix. 1. Ep. 301.

‡ Balbus in Cic. de N. D. 2. Vid. August. de Civit. D. lib. iv. 33. vi. 10.

little or no root in the hearty belief or approbation of those who professed them.

And thus much may suffice, I suppose, to declare that Paganism did not proceed from divine revelation, but from human invention or suggestion diabolical.

I shall only adjoin that the considering this case of heathens may be of good use (and to that use indeed St. Paul hath largely applied it) in confirming what we before urged, the great need of some full and plain revelation to the world of God's mind, in order to God's glory and man's good; as also it is of singular use, (which also the same Apostle frequently did put it to,) by the contemplation thereof, to discover our great obligations to bless and thank God for his great mercy in revealing his heavenly truth to us, from whence we are freed from errors and mischiefs so deplorable; which otherwise, from human infirmity and the Devil's malice, we should easily (and in a manner necessarily) have incurred.

That pretence was ancienter in standing; but there hath, even since Christianity, started up another, (Mahometanism,) which, if not on other accounts, yet in respect to its age, and to the port it bears in the world, demands some consideration; for it hath continued a long time, and hath vastly overspread the earth: neither is it more formidable in its looks than peremptory in its words; vaunting itself to be no less than a complete, a general, an ultimate declaration of God's pleasure, cancelling and voiding all others that have gone before. But examining both the substance and circumstances thereof, considering the quality of the instruments by whom, of the times when, it was introduced; of the places where, of the people who first or afterward did receive it; the manner of its rise, progress, and continuance; as also the matter it teaches or enjoins; we shall not find stamped on it the genuine characters of a divine original and authority, but have great reason to deem it a brood of most lewd and impudent cozenage. In times of great disturbance and confusion, when barbarous nations, like torrents, did overflow the world, and turned all things upside down; in times of general corruption and disorder in men's minds and manners, when, even among Christians, ignorance and superstition, dissension and uncharitableness, impiety and

iniquity did greatly prevail; in a very blind and obscure corner of the earth, among a crew of wild thieves and runagates, (such have those Arabians been always famed and known to be,) this sect had its birth and fosterage; among those fierce and savage overrunners of the world it got its growth and stature; into this sort of people, (being indeed in its constitution well accommodated to their humor and genius,) it was partly insinuated by juggling tricks, partly driven by seditious violence; the first author hereof being a person, according to the description given of him in their own legends, of no honest or honorable qualities, but having all the marks of an impostor; rebellious and perfidious, inhuman and cruel, lewd and lascivious, of a base education, of a fraudulent and turbulent disposition, of a vicious life, pretending to enthusiasms, and working of wonders; but these such as were both in their nature absurd and incredible, and for their use vain and unprofitable: at such a season and in such a soil, by such means and by such a person, (abetted by associates like himself, whom his arts or their interests had inveigled to join with him,) was this religion first planted; and for its propagation it had that great advantage of falling in the way of barbarous people, void of learning and civility, and not prepossessed with other notions or any sense of religion; who thence (as mankind is naturally susceptive of religious impressions) were capable and apt to admit any religion first offering itself, especially one so gross as this was, so agreeable to their furious humors and lusts. Afterward being furnished with such champions, it diffused itself by rage and terror of arms, convincing men's minds only by the sword, and using no other arguments but blows. On the same grounds of ignorance and force it still subsists, neither offering for, nor taking against itself any reason; refusing all examination, and, on extreme penalties, forbidding any dispute about its truth; being indeed so far (whether out of judgment or fatal instinct) wise, as conscious to itself, or foreboding, that the letting in of a little light, and a moderate liberty of discussing its pretences, would easily overthrow it. Now that divine wisdom should choose those black and boisterous times to publish his will, is as if the king should purposely order his proclamation to be made in a tempestuous night, when no man scarce dared to stir out, nor

any man could well see what was done, or hear what was said: much fitter surely to that purpose were serene and calm days, a time of general civility and peace, like that of Augustus Cæsar. That the declaration of God's mind should issue from the deserts of Arabia, (that den of robbers,) is as if the king should cause his edicts to be set up in the blindest and dirtiest nook of the suburbs: the market-cross surely, or the exchange, (the place of most general and ordinary concourse,) such as, in respect to the world, was the flourishing empire of Rome, were more convenient, and wisely chosen for that purpose. That, passing over the more gentle and tractable part of his people, a prince should send his laws to a rabble of banditti; should pick out for his messenger a most dissolute varlet, attended with a crew of desperate ruffians, resolved to buffet and rifle all they met, were an odd way of proceeding: to communicate his pleasure unto the better and more orderly sort of people, (such as were the subjects of that well governed empire;) by persons of good meaning, mild disposition, and innocent behavior, (such as were the Apostles of our Lord;) in a quiet and gentle manner, (such as these only used;) would surely better become a worthy prince. Thus even the exterior circumstances of Mahometanism, (both absolutely and in comparison,) belonging to its rise, its growth, its continuance, (so full of indecency, of iniquity, of inhumanity,) ground strong presumptions against its divinity; or rather, plainly demonstrate that it could not proceed from God, whose truth cannot need such instruments or such courses to maintain it, whose goodness certainly abhors them. But farther, if we look into the matter and inward frame thereof, we shall find it a mass of absurd opinions, odd stories, and uncouth ceremonies; compounded chiefly of the dregs of Christian heresies, together with some ingredients of Judaism and Paganism confusedly jumbled, or unskilfully tempered together. From Christian heresies it seems to have derived its negative doctrines, opposite to Christianity; as for instance, when allowing Christ much respect, it yet denies his being the Son of God, and that he did really suffer; rejecting his true story, it affixes false ones on him: as also some positive ones; for example, that unreasonable opinion, so much misbeseeming God, that God hath a body, (Mahomet, forsooth, once

touched his hand, and felt it very cold,) might be drawn from the Anthropomorphites; that doctrine concerning the fatal determination of all events, (so prejudicial to all religion, subverting the foundations of justice between God and man, man's free choice in serving God, God's free disposal of rewards suitable to men's actions,) they probably borrowed from the Manichees, a sect that much obtained in those eastern parts. The Jew contributed his ceremonies of circumcision and frequent purgations by washing, his abstinence from swine's flesh, his allowance of polygamy and divorce: I might add, that perhaps from him they filched that proud, inhuman, and uncivil humor of monopolising divine favor and good-will to themselves; so of restraining their own kindness and respect to persons of their profession or sect; condemning, despising, and hating all the world beside themselves; calling all others dogs, and adjudging all to certain damnation; and, which is more, affirming that all of their belief, how wicked soever their lives have been, shall at length assuredly partake of salvation: so partial do they make Almighty God, so addicted to a mere name and outward show, feigning him, as in shape so in passions, human and like themselves. Indeed in this main part of religion, a true notion of God, his nature, his attributes, his method of providence, their doctrine is very peccant, representing him, in his nature and actions, very unworthily. Their descriptions concerning the state of men after death, (that main and principal part of religion, which gives life and vigor to the rest,) whence can we better deduce its original, than from the Pagan notions or stories of Elysium and Hades? what better pattern can we find, whence that paradise of corporeal delight, or rather of brutish sensuality, should be transcribed, which any man sees how poor an encouragement it is, how unworthy a reward, to virtue; yea, how much it is apt to detract from, to discourage all performances of reason and honesty? The like we might say of the punishments (which in due correspondence to the rewards they propound) they only or chiefly inflict on the body; the main part, it seems, of which a Mahometan man consists. And must he not be very stupid, who can suffer himself to be persuaded that such conceits (conceits favorable indeed to pleasure, and indulgent to the flesh, but contrary to

virtue, prejudicial to the spirit and reason of man) should come from the God of wisdom and holiness? Farther, how Mahomet was inspired, his stories alone will evince; stories patched up out of old histories corrupted, mangled, and transplaced; interlarded with fabulous legends, contrary to all probable records of history, (the names, places, times, and all the circumstances whereof he most unskilfully changes and confounds,) yea repugnant to the nature and possibility of things; so that in a manner every tale he tells is an evident argument of an ignorant and an impudent impostor; and he that so blunders and falsifies about matters of fact, who will trust him in matters of right and reason? which things, if it were worth the while, might by various instances be showed; and you may every where receive satisfaction therein. The like might be said concerning its multitude of silly ceremonies, grounded on no reasonable design, nor subservient to any purpose of virtue; the institution whereof no man therefore, without injury to the divine wisdom, can impute thereto. But I shall only add two farther considerations on this matter: one, that whatever is good or plausible in this religion, (such as are some precepts of justice and charity, although these confined among themselves,) may reasonably be supposed taken from Christianity, which being senior in standing, may (in points wherein both agree) well go for the mistress; and however that, on the score of such doctrines or laws, we have no reason to think this religion came from God; for why should he reveal that again, which in a larger extent, on better grounds, with more advantage, he had declared before; which also then was commonly embraced and acknowleged? I also observe that this religion, by its own free concessions, doth evidently destroy itself; for it admits Christianity once to have been a true doctrine, proceeding from and attested to by God: but Christianity did ever declare itself to be a general, perpetual, perfect, and immutable rule of faith and practice; that never any accessions thereto, any alterations thereof, ought to be made or admitted; that whatever spirit, coming after it, should offer to innovate, or pretend to new discoveries contrary to, or different from it, must be suspected of delusion, foretelling and forewarning against such endeavors that should appear, as fallacious and mischievous:

this, it appears, (by the writings of those who first planted Christianity, writings which no man in his wits can question to be theirs; being through a continual uninterrupted course of times, from the beginning, by general consent of both friends and adversaries, acknowleged and attested to as so; all characters within them imaginably proper for that purpose, confirming the same; as also by the current tradition of their disciples, immediate and mediate, extant in records unquestionable, and by all other means conceivable,) this, I say, it most plainly appears, was one grand doctrine and pretence of Christianity at first, which the Mahometans acknowleging originally true and divine in the gross, must consequently grant itself to be an imposture.

And thus much seems sufficient to demonstrate that religion not to be of a divine extraction. I shall next proceed to consider the pretences of Judaism, and to show that neither it was such a perfect revelation as we proved it probable God would vouchsafe to make. But that shall be the subject of another discourse.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XV.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 13.

THE plea of Judaism examined. This religion we acknowlege to have had its birth from God: its truth and goodness we do not question: but we find it in many respects defective, and without the conditions due to such a revelation as we require; for it was not universal; nor full and complete; nor designed to be of perpetual obligation and use.

1. It was not general, nor directed to, or intended to instruct and oblige mankind: itself expresses so much; its whole tenor and frame shows it: so do all the circumstances of its rise and progress. This illustrated by the words of Scripture; by divers of its laws; St. Paul calling the whole law a *partition wall*; by the *covenant* made between God and a particular nation; a covenant in formal terms declaring this. In the body of the law there is often a distinction made between them who were bound to observe it, and others that were not; there are duties enjoined, which others could not properly or decently perform: these stated: the same inference drawn from the peculiar rewards of obedience, and punishments of disobedience, &c.

It may be added that, as the laws and rites of this religion were designed only for the Jews; as they did only agree to their circumstances; so they were only suited to their inclinations and capacities: this topic enlarged on. From which and many other obvious considerations it may appear that this dispensation was not, in its nature or design, general; but

was designedly restrained to one peculiar people and place, &c.: it is not therefore in reason to be taken for such a revelation as was argued to be needful for us, or to be expected from him, *who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works:* this enlarged on.

2. Farther, as this revelation was particular, so was it also partial; as God did not by it speak his mind to all, so did he not therein speak out all his mind. The Apostle to the Hebrews charges it in this respect with blameableness, imperfection, weakness, and unprofitableness: (Heb. viii. 7. vii. 18.) This charge made good by a consideration of the parts thereof which direct, and those which lead to practice; also the aids and means facilitating obedience to the laws or rules enjoined. Neither in discoursing thus do we lay any unseemly imputation on God, the Author of that religion; the making so imperfect a revelation being nowise at variance with his wisdom, goodness, or justice: reasons for this given; in particular the character of that people, to whose disposition and capacity its laws and institutions were adapted: this character fully developed, as well as the institutions themselves; whence it is inferred that such a dispensation could not be convenient for the rational nature of man generally, and for perpetuity.

It may be objected to our line of argument, that God did afterwards annex some labels, as it were, to this deed; that he imparted by degrees farther manifestations of light and grace to the Jews, through prophets and holy men, &c.; but that may be taken as a good confirmation of our argument: this explained.

It may be added that Judaism did not serve, in effect, sufficiently to better men's lives; to qualify a competent number of men for God's favor and their own happiness: this fully shown. Now the tree which has always borne such fruits, so unsavory and unwholesome, we cannot admire as excellent and perfect, though it might be good for those early times, &c.

3. We proceed to the third defect which was observed in this religion, that it was not designed for perpetual obligation and use. As it was particular in respect of the persons to whom it was directed; as it was partial and incomplete in its frame; so it was, according to its design, temporary and mutable.

This conclusion indeed might be inferred from what has been said concerning the narrow extent and intrinsic imperfection thereof; but we have another more convincing sort of evidence, in many pregnant intimations, many express remonstrances and predictions, that God did intend in due time to introduce a great change and reform, and enlarge the bounds of his dominions, and to receive all nations into the fold of his special care and love; in fine, to dispense a general and full revelation of his mind and will, of his grace and favor to mankind, &c. This fully shown and illustrated by quotations from holy Scripture. And what God declared by verbal testimonies, the same we see in real effects: his providence has made good his word; he hath not only released men from that religion, but hath manifestly discountenanced it: present state of the Jewish nation considered. Thus is the second step of these discourses concluded. Two others still remain. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XV.

OF THE IMPERFECTION OF THE JEWISH RELIGION.

EPHESIANS, CHAP. I.—VERSE 13.

In whom ye also (trusted), having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

THAT it is probable God should vouchsafe to mankind a full and clear declaration of his mind and will concerning their duty and their welfare, I did show: that Paganism and Mahometanism, without reason and truth, did or does pretend thereto, I also briefly discoursed: I now proceed to examine the plea which Judaism puts in, and to make good that neither it is well grounded, (which, as the cause deserves, I shall do somewhat more largely.) The Jewish religion we acknowlege had its birth from the revelation and appointment of God; its truth and its goodness we do not call in question: but yet looking into it, we shall find it in many respects defective, and wanting the conditions due to such a revelation as we require. For it was not universal, (neither being directed to, nor fitted for, the nature and needs of mankind;) it was not full and complete, it was not designed to be of perpetual obligation or use.

1. First, I say, this revelation was not general; not directed to, or intended for to instruct and oblige mankind: itself expressly affirms so much; the whole tenor and frame thereof shows it; so do all the circumstances of its rise and progress.

That it was intended peculiarly for that small nation, possessing a very inconsiderable portion of the earth; distinguished, and indeed, as it were, concealed from the rest of mankind both on purpose and in effect; for it so remained for many ages (till the Macedonian first, and afterward the Roman conquests opened the world, and disclosed them) hid in a solitary obscurity; even so far as to scape the observation of the most inquisitive surveyors of the earth, the most curious searchers into the customs of all people, (as of Herodotus for instance, who, nicely describing the places and manners of the people all about them, could not discern them, and takes no notice of them, although for their peculiar manners otherwise most remarkable, and deserving his mention;) appears by express passages in their law and holy writings; 'He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; He hath not dealt so with any nation; and his judgments they have not known them.' It is plainly affirmed that God did make that discovery of his will and mind peculiarly to that people, and to no other; 'I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine,' saith God to the Jews; 'So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are on the face of the earth,' saith Moses in his address to God; 'Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God;' 'The Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth,' saith Moses to that people: which passages (together with divers others of the same import) being used to engage and encourage a singular obedience, do plainly say that God transacted with that people singly and separately from all other; taking them on purpose, as it were, into a corner, at a good distance, and beyond hearing of others, that he might there signify alone to them his pleasure, peculiarly concerning them. Yea to this purpose, of maintaining a distance and distinction from the rest of mankind, divers of their laws were appointed; as not only the nature of such laws doth imply, but words annexed to them sometimes express; 'I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people; ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean.' Whence St. Paul calls their law *μεσότοιχον φραγμοῦ*, a partition wall, that fenced

that nation, and severed it from others; and an enmity, being framed to set them in distance and variance from the rest of men. That whole business also of this constitution is frequently styled a covenant, made, not between God and mankind, but between God and that single nation; a covenant in formal terms mentioning them, and them only; sealed with marks and characters peculiar to them; requiring conditions and duties possible or proper only for them to perform; exhibiting promises only suitable to them; propounding rewards which they only were capable to receive, and punishments which they only could undergo. 'Hear, O Israel,' is the usual style, according to which those laws are directed; 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt,' is the introduction to the decalogue itself, (which among all parts of that law looks fairest toward a general importance and obligation; which yet is so specially directed, and is indeed peculiarly called the covenant between God and that people; viz. synecdochically, as being the principal part directive of their duty.) In the body of the laws itself, there is often made a distinction between them who were bound to observe it, and others that were not; between 'brethren and strangers;' between 'Hebrews and aliens;' with duties suited and limited in regard to that distinction, (as in the cases of remitting debts, releasing servants, exacting use, and the like:) there are injoined duties, which others could not properly or decently perform; such as observation of feasts in commemoration and thankfulness for mercies vouchsafed to that nation; as also others which could not be observed by all men with any possibility or convenience; such as those of repairing thrice a year to one certain place, established for God's worship; of bringing tithes and oblations thither, and the like; neither was the number of priests and Levites, set apart for God's service, proportioned otherwise than in respect to that one people. The encouragements also and rewards promised to obedience do incommunicably pertain to them, as also the discouragements from, and punishments for, disobedience; a long and prosperous enjoyment of the land of Canaan was the meed set before them, if they should obey and make good their part of the

covenant; a dispossession thereof, or affliction in it, was the punishment threatened, if they should presume to disobey and violate those engagements; 'Ye shall walk in all the laws, which the Lord your God hath commanded you; that ye may live, and that it may be well with you;' and 'that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye possess. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.' Such were the promises exciting to obedience; and the threatenings deterring from disobedience were answerable, as every where in their law and story is visible.

I may also hereto add, that as the laws and rights of this religion were designed only for this people, as they did only agree to their circumstances; so they were only suited to their inclinations and their capacities; their inclinations, which were very stubborn and perverse; their capacities, which were very low and gross, as their own prophets do on many occasions affirm and complain; being dissentaneous and repugnant to the common humor and genius of mankind: so experience discovered them to be, when they became more apparent and observable; *Judæorum mos absurdus, sordidusque;* ('The Jewish way of life is uncouth and sordid,' was Tacitus his censure; Hist. v. 5.) and, They run counter to all men, was St. Paul's imputation on that people; 1 Thess. ii. 15. to which the general conceit of men concerning them did agree; so little plausible or probable was their way, so liable to dislike and contempt: which argues it unfit to be commended by the God of wisdom to the generality of mankind.

By which and many other like considerations obvious enough may appear that this dispensation was not (either according to its nature or in its design) general, or such as respected the main body of mankind, but rather very particular and restrained; designedly restrained to the obligation and use of one place or people, if compared to the world of men, inconsiderably narrow and small; (the fewest of all people God himself says they were.) That, in fine, this constitution had only the nature of a municipal law, imposing burdens and indulging privileges on

one city or territory; not of a common civil sanction, established for the obligation, use, and benefit of the whole commonwealth, or empire subject to the Almighty King.

It is not therefore in reason to be taken for such a revelation as we argued needful for us, and to be expected from him, who, as the psalmist, as reason, as experience tells us, 'is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works;' from him who is the common Father of all, and, as St. Paul expresseth it, 'hath made of one blood πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων, the whole nation and commonwealth of mankind;' from him who cannot be in affection anywise fond or partial, a respecter of persons or of nations, as St. Paul in the second to the Romans, and St. Peter in the Acts also implies. From him who is not only the Maker, but, as our Apostle also styles him, 'the Saviour of all men;' and, as even the Hebrew wise man asserts, 'careth for all alike;' being 'desirous that all men should be saved, and come to the knowlege of the truth; not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance.' From him who is not only φιλεβραῖος, or φιλέλλην, (a lover of Jews, or of Greeks;) but φιλάνθρωπος, 'a lover of men;' and φιλόψυχος, 'a lover of souls;' who, lastly, 'is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also,' as St. Paul urges this argument; and as also the reason of the thing and the voice of nature doth declare: from this God, I say, so disposed, so related toward us all, so equally concerned in regard to us; so impartial in his affection, so unconfined in his bounty; we should have reason to expect rather no revelation at all, than one so scant, and pinched in such narrow bounds; so ill proportioned to the glory due to himself, to the need and benefit of mankind. We cannot reasonably imagine that he should contract the effects of his goodness, or the manifestations of his glory, to so slender a parcel of mankind, (no better qualified, no more deserving such special regard than the rest; as himself, to repress their fond conceits, and probably in way of anticipation, to intimate his design of farther extending that favor in due season to others, who might pretend thereto with as much right and reason as themselves, doth sometime declare;) that he who hath freely dispensed the influences of sun and stars to all alike, should cause the light of his heavenly truth to shine, as it were, but

into one small closet of his spacious house; leaving all the rest, so many stately rooms thereof, encompassed with shades of ignorance and error; that he should pour down the showers of his blessings spiritual (otherwise than he hath done those natural) on one only scarce discernible spot of ground; letting all the world beside (like a desert of sand) lie parched with drought, overspread with desolation and barrenness.

This revelation therefore was not in this respect sufficient; wanting in its nature and design that due condition of generality and amplitude. But

2. Farther; as this revelation was particular, so was it also partial; as God did not by it speak his mind to all, so did he not therein speak out all his mind. Our Apostle to the Hebrews chargeth it with blameableness: (*εἰ πρώτη ἦν ἄμεμπτος*, 'if the first covenant had been blameless;') with imperfection, with weakness, with improfitableness, (*ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγούσης ἐντολῆς διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενές· καὶ ἀνωφελές· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος*· 'There is made an abolition of the precedent commandment for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: for the law made nothing perfect;') he means all this in degree, and in comparison to what was possible, and in some respects needful. Which charge may be easily made good, (*a priori*,) considering both the parts thereof which direct, and those which excite to practice; together with the means and aids enabling and facilitating obedience to the laws or rules enjoined; also, (*a posteriori*,) if we regard the fruits and effects thereof. Surveying first, I say, the directive part, we may observe both a redundancy in things circumstantial or exterior, and a defectiveness in things substantial and interior: there be ritual institutions in vast number very nicely described and strongly pressed; the observation of times and places, the distinction of meats and of habits, ('touch not, taste not, handle not,') corporeal cleansings and purgations; modalities of exterior performance in sacrifices and oblations, those *δικαιώματα σαρκὸς*, (justifications of the mere flesh, that only concerned the body or outward man, and could not perfect the observer's conscience; could neither satisfy nor edify his mind and inward man,) we see with extreme punctuality prescribed and enjoined, some of them under very heavy penalties, (of utter extermina-

tion and excision.) While moral duties (duties of justice and charity, yea of temperance and sobriety itself) and spiritual devotions (so exceedingly more agreeable to rational nature, and which could not but be much more pleasing to God) were more sparingly delivered in precept, less clearly explained, not so fully urged with rational inducements, nor in a due proportion guarded with rewards. Many things were plainly permitted, or tacitly connived at, (as polygamy and divorce, some kinds of retaliation, cursing, revenge; some degrees of uncharitableness,) which even natural reason dislikes or condemns. So faulty was that dispensation, as to the part thereof directive of life; and it was no less in that part which promotes and secures good practice, by applying fit excitements to obedience, and fit restraints from disobedience; rightly managing those great instruments and springs of human activity, natural courage, hope, and fear. Nothing so damps men's alacrity in endeavor, as desperation or diffidence of good success; nothing so quickens it as a confidence or strong presumption thereof: and how then could they be very earnest in endeavors to please God, who were not assured of (yea, had so much reason to diffide in) God's placability and readiness, on repentance, to forgive sins wilfully and presumptuously committed, such as no man surely lives altogether free from? The not opening a door of mercy seems discouraging and apt to slacken performance of duty; what was then the shutting it up close, the bolting it with that iron bar: 'Cursed is he that abides not in all things written in this law to do them;' which at least will exclude assurance, will quash the hopes of mercy; will consequently enervate the sinews of care and industry in serving God. Neither were the rewards of either kind (those that spurred to obedience, those that stopped from disobedience) in measure or in kind such as the reason of things doth afford and require. They were only temporal, and chiefly corporeal or sensible; such as belonged to the outward state of this transitory life, which neither can deserve much regard, nor are apt to have great efficacy; for who will in effect, why should any man in reason, highly value the accommodations of this short and uncertain life? who will, who should be greatly terrified with the inconveniences thereof? whom, probably, would such considerations sufficiently animate

to encounter and sustain the perils, the difficulties, the troubles, and the disgraces, to which often the practice of virtue is exposed? whom would they guard from the enchantments of pleasure, profit, and honor, alluring men to sin? the pleasures of sense, how improper an encouragement, how unworthy a recompense are they for the labors and achievements of virtue! incomparably better surely, more worthy of regard, and more effectual on man's reason, more apt to produce and to promote real virtue and hearty piety, are the rewards concerning the future state of our immortal soul; which yet it is a question whether the law doth ever mention; it is plain it doth not clearly propound and apply them. Indeed as to evident discovery concerning the immortality of man's soul, or the future state, so material a point of religion, of so grand moment and influence on practice, even the Gentile theology, assisted by ancient common tradition, seems to have outgone the Jewish, grounding on their revealed law; the Pagan priests more expressly taught, more frequently inculcated arguments drawn from thence, than the Hebrew prophets; a plain instance and argument of the imperfection of this religion.

I subjoin, God's not thereby (in an ordinary certain way, according to any pact or promise) affording or exhibiting such interior influences of grace on the minds of men, as, considering the natural frailty, blindness, and impotency of men, appears necessary to render them obedient to the rules of duty, to guide them in the ways of truth and goodness, to free them from error and sin, to shield and animate them against temptation; is a main defect in that religion; apt to breed fear in the onset on duty, to nourish doubt in the performance thereof, to settle despair on a fall or defeat. It presented to men's eyes the obligation to duty, the difficulty thereof, the danger of transgressing it, but did not openly represent the means requisite to perform it. And what can be more discouraging or discomforting than to see oneself, on great peril and penalty, obliged to that, which is apparently very hard, or, considering his strength, impossible, no help or support being visible? especially joining the consideration before touched, that no evasion by pardon, no rise by repentance doth appear. Whence we may well infer that indeed, in effect, this dispensation was

what St. Paul calls it, διακονία θανάτου, and διακονία κατακρίσεως, a ministry of death and condemnation; a subjection to a curse; a killing letter; bearing nothing less in the looks and language thereof, than certain death and unavoidable ruin; a lying under insupportable slavery, both to the guilt and punishment of sin. 'If thou doest ill, sin lieth at the door.'

Neither in discoursing thus do we lay any misbeseeming imputation on God, the author of that religion; the making so imperfect a revelation nowise being disagreeable to his wisdom, his goodness, or his justice. As for a time he might withhold the declaration of his mind to all mankind, so might he, on the same or like grounds of wise counsel, forbear to declare some part thereof to that people: no special reason appears that could oblige, that might induce him not to be reserved, as well in part to these few men, as in whole to those, all the rest of men; yea, there be good reasons assignable why the divine wisdom should be then so sparing of its mind, why God should only show his back parts, as it were, to Moses, and 'not let him see his face;' not discover all of his nature and of his pleasure to him; why then he should seem to delight in, to lay so much stress on those carnal and ceremonious observances; why he should forbear to exact that height of spiritual duty, and not draw men to compliance with the best motives of pure reason. A dawning of light perhaps more became that morning of times than a meridian brightness; that infancy of the world was not, it may be, ripe for a more deep and perfect instruction; that nation, however, to whose state, to whose disposition and capacity those laws and institutions were adapted, was very unfit for the highest and hardest lessons. For a nation it was (as from infallible hands we have it) not wise, or considerate; not grave, or constant; not meek, or pliable; but a very stupid and heady, a very fickle and humorous, a very froward and stubborn generation of men; 'They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding,' was said of them at first by him who delivered their law, or rather by God himself who enjoined it: and, 'I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee,' saith the prophet concerning the house of Jacob; alluding, it seems, to those many

passages in the law, where they are termed 'a stiff-necked people:' uncapable thence both of the finest notions and the more rigorous precepts; like children, by reason of the grossness of their apprehension, and the unruliness of their passion, they were not οἰκεῖοι ἀκροαταὶ, proper auditors, of a more pure and accurate discipline; wherefore as such the divine wisdom and goodness was pleased to deal with them; dispensing with the infirmities of their age, condescending to the meanness of their capacities, feeding them with milk, alluring them with petty shows, scaring them with frightful appearances, indulging them innocent trifles, pastimes, and sports; so tempering his ordinances as might best serve to keep them in good humor; to draw and entice them easily unto somewhat good, to curb and restrain them from mischief. Whence St. Paul calls those institutions with good reason elements; (poor and mean elements, and elements of the world; rudiments of knowlege and discipline, suited to the capacity of the first age, and the meanest rank; such as vulgar and silly people were fit to learn, and able to practise;) with good reason he calls the law a pedagogue, that by instilling into those νήπιοι (those infants, or little children, so also he terms them,) some imperfect notions of truth; by keeping them in some good order, did prepare them for a higher instruction, did predispose them toward a better course of life. Indeed, we may easily conceive that such variety of superficial formalities might well agree to childish and plebeian fancies; but to men of somewhat elevated minds, and well improved reason; of sound judgment, and large experience; who had tasted, and could relish rational entertainments, (and such in some measure and comparatively are men generally born and brought up in countries and places where civility hath obtained; at least they are capable of being so, fit means being used to render them so,) they must needs be insipid und disgustful. In the study of truth and practice of virtue, there are alluring beauties and sweetnesses; which it cannot but displease him, who hath seen and felt them, to be diverted from, by an obligation to attend so precisely on such an abundance of petty, circumstantial, exterior observances; to be forced, I say, to chew such husks of things, to him, who thereby must neglect so delicious kernels, cannot but be grievous

and irksome. Wiser men are never much affected with laborious and tedious pomps; they are designed always to amuse children, and the common sort. I add, that this dispensation was suited not only to the childish fancy, but to the slavish spirit of that people; who, having in them little of ingenuity, or willingness freely to do good, would be apt to wax not only dronish and lazy, but sturdy and insolent, had they not been kept under and inured to something of burden and toil. Such all wise men know to be the proper course of managing people of slavish temper; but toward men of a disposition more ingenuous, tractable, and free, such as commonly men civilised and well governed are or may become, such a proceeding were incongruous; they will either refuse to undergo such unnecessary burdens, or bear them unwillingly; their obedience will be none, or lame, or unkindly and heartless. God therefore dealt according to wisdom with the Jews, when he imposed such burdens on their shoulders, when he pinched their stiff necks with such yokes, when he detained them in such fetters; so they were, and so they are truly called by our Apostles; burdens intolerably heavy; yokes very galling and vexatious; fetters very strait and grievous; which they reasonably therefore reckon it a very valuable privilege and benefit, purchased by our Saviour for us, to be loosed from. But such a dispensation could not be convenient for the rational nature in common, and for perpetuity: it neither becomes God himself, who will not without need or profit vex his creatures; who cannot be fully satisfied with performances of so mean a sort; who necessarily doth affect services of a more excellent nature and importance; (those spiritual services of love, reverence, and gratitude; of purity, righteousness, and goodness.) It doth not suit man, not being apt to perfect his nature, not being able to satisfy his mind. As he, by the improvement and use of his reason, will easily discern the small worth of such performances, so will he not readily comply with them without regret; but will soon apprehend the matter to be indeed, as St. Paul represents it, that an obligation to such rites is a bond against us (ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν, ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν,) which in reason he may expect to be wiped out and cancelled; that a law consisting of such precepts hath

an enmity, or repugnance to his nature; that such a dispensation is a pupillage, and a slavery, which he earnestly must desire to be redeemed and mancipated from.

Thus doth this revelation on many respects, grounded on the very intrinsic nature thereof, appear partial and imperfect; and consequently not such as that which we reasonably may expect from the divine wisdom and goodness.

It is true, which some may deem an objection against our discourse, but I should rather take for a good confirmation thereof, that God did afterward annex some labels, as it were, to this deed; that he imparted by degrees farther manifestations of light and grace to that people, by the instructions, and by the exemplary practices of prophets and holy men raised up among them by his especial instinct and order; in a manner and on occasions extraordinary. The prophets frequently declared that God had not much delight in those ceremonious observances; nor would accept them otherwise than as proceeding from good dispositions of mind, and as accompanied with practices of moral duty and more spiritual piety: that he chiefly did require of them hearty reverence toward himself, and submission to his will; strict justice, and tender charity toward their neighbors; meekness and patience in their behavior; temperance and sobriety in all their conversation. By them also he discovered more of his gracious disposition, and of his merciful intentions toward them; that he would not be extremely rigorous in punishing the transgressions of his law; that he would not refuse pardon to the most grievous sins, not remain irreconcilable toward the most heinous offenders, on their sincere repentance and amendment of life. By the practices of holy men he also showed that the rigor of that ceremonious law was mitigable; that in some cases its obligation might be relaxed, and its observance dispensed with; that a service more refined and rational was especially acceptable to God; that he loved a purer devotion, a perfecter righteousness, a higher charity than such as the letter of their law prescribed. By them also he intimated, which their devotions plainly infer, that he not only exacted such duties, but was ready to afford them his assistance to the performing them; by teaching and admonishing them within; enlightening their minds, and infla-

ming their affections; directing, exciting, and quickening them to obedience. Thus did that morning of divine knowlege, from the first dawning, by degrees grow more lightsome; yet never arrived to a perfect day-light; the shadows were not quite dispersed; the whole horizon of heavenly truth was not disclosed thereby. Even those arbitrary and extraordinary dispensations of farther instruction are so many good arguments that God did not primarily intend the Jewish law for a complete delivery of his mind; his reserving so much to be on occasion detected, implied that more still might rest behind; accordingly, as indeed we see, that the future state, and immortality itself, was not by the prophets fully brought to light; that the better covenant, established on better assurances, was not yet revealed; that all means requisite for the glory of God, for the good of man, were not thoroughly provided for.

Of which conclusion we shall add this one farther probation, that Judaism did not serve, in effect, sufficiently to better men's lives; to qualify a competent number of men for God's favor, or for their own happiness; by disposing their minds to any tolerable degree of true sanctity, piety, and righteousness, acceptable to God, profitable to human society, perfective of man's nature. It is a point that St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans insisteth much on, and excellently applies to this same purpose. The Jews were highly conceited of their way, scorning the rest of men as altogether ignorant of God's will, and uncapable of his favor; but St. Paul represses their arrogance, by showing the difference was not so great as they imagined, between them and others, not even in those respects; for that the special revelation, which they were so proud of, had not produced effects considerably better in them, than the light of reason and the law of nature (means so despicable in their esthem) had brought forth in others; which charge being made good, it is evident they had no reason to prize their way so much; or to confide therein, as perfect; as thoroughly, in the best manner, and in reasonable measure sufficient to qualify them for God's favor, or to bring them into a state of happiness; yea, it is plain, on that supposition, in some respects their way had the disadvantage, and made their condition worse

than that of other men; rendering their faults more grievous and inexcusable, more provoking God's displeasure against them; especially seeing, on the tenor of their religion, they had scarce any better ground to presume of pardon or impunity, than other men had from instincts of nature, from rational conjecture. Now that such a charge on them is no slander, we need no other probations than what the continual stream of their own histories doth represent concerning their manners; than the many full and plain testimonies of their own prophets concerning them; than the extreme punishments by divine jusrice inflicted on them; than the common reputation they have continually had among men, grounded on experience. What is their history but one continued tragedy, as it were, setting out the various strange rebellions and apostasies of that people, with the miserable consequences proceeding from them? What do their prophetical writings contain beside pathetical expostulations, severe reproofs, dreadful comminations of judgment on them for their prodigious impieties, iniquities, and lewdnesses; general in extension over all persons, excessive in degree, by no means curable or corrigible? 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,' (Jerusalem, that place of universal concourse, the heart of that nation, the special seat and sanctuary of their religion,) 'see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it,' says Jeremiah, v. 1. 'There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, (of Jerusalem,) like a roaring lion ravening the prey; her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things; her princes are like wolves; the people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery: and I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none,' saith Ezekiel: and the rest frequently harp on the same thing. But these prophets, you will say, lived in unhappy times; so circumstantiated, that no religion could have much prevailed on men's minds and lives; such as make every religion liable to the same exceptions: well, but Isaiah, one would think, lived in better times; for how many better kings had that nation, that more strictly prac-

tised or earnestly promoted piety, than Hezekiah? yet, 'A sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evil doers,' were they, it seems, even then; 'the land was defiled under the inhabitants thereof; the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there was no soundness in the body of that nation.' Yea, when did that religion flourish in greater vigor and strength, when had it more advantage of exerting its best virtue, than in the peaceful and prosperous times of that great and mighty, that good and zealously pious prince, king David? yet, even in his reign, according to his own observation and testimony, 'they were generally corrupt, and did abominable works; they all were gone aside, and were altogether become filthy; there was none that did good, no, not one.' But we need not urge particular instances, since we have it so often affirmed in gross, that the manners of that people, from first to last, were constantly naught and offensive to God: 'The children of Israel, and the children of Judah,' saith God himself in Jeremiah, 'have only done evil before me from their youth.' And again; 'Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them; yet they hearkened not unto me.' The law, although by extraordinary persons, in fittest opportunities, with utmost vehemence and diligence inculcated and urged on them, proved continually ineffectual to produce the fruits of piety and righteousness. The same you may see confessed by Ezra; and not only acknowleged, but evidently demonstrated by Nehemiah, in a punctual narration, deduced from the beginning to his time, in the ninth chapter of that book. Again; the heavy calamities by divine justice so often inflicted, so long continued on them; and, at last, God's so visible utter dereliction and disowning them, do also sufficiently declare what their deserts and what their qualities have been; as also what good may ever be expected from them. For as God never punishes grievously without a proportionate cause, so he never quite deserts, but in a desperate case, when no competent emendation may be expected. He is not wont to lop off the branches, but when they grow dead and barren; he never cuts down the tree,

while there is any hope of fruit. This providence therefore toward that people shows that in God's esteem that law is to be laid aside, as an instrument grown useless, and unfit for his purposes; unfit to serve his glory to further men's good.

I add; that through all course of times their manners have not procured in a manner from any men any good-will or respect; but indeed the common dislike, contempt, and hatred of men: they have always (since well known and observed in the world) been reputed a sort of people not only above all men vain and superstitious, addicted to fond conceits and fabulous stories, but extremely proud and arrogant, churlish and sour, ill natured and false-hearted toward all men; not good or kind, yea not so much as just or true, toward any but themselves;

(Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti;
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos; Juv. Sat. xiv.

Apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu, sed adversus omnes alios hostile odium. Tacitus.)

Such are the obvious characters of them, such were their humors noted to be; humors not only implausible, but really blameable, deservedly offensive and odious; being contrary to the common sense, to the natural ingenuity of man. They have been long, as we see them now to be, partly for the vanity of their conceits, partly for the baseness of their minds and manners, and partly also for the wretchedness of their condition, the scorn and obloquy of all nations.

Now the tree, which hath always bore such fruits, (so unsavory, so unwholesome,) we have no reason to admire, to esteem excellent and perfect. It might be good for those times, when men willingly did feed on acorns, on crabs, on bramble-berries; but cannot so well serve now, when higher improvements of reason, when philosophy and learning by a general influence on the world, have prepared the palates of men to relish, their stomachs to digest, more delicious and more wholesome fare. But,

3. I proceed to show the third defect, which I at first observed in this religion, that it was not designed for perpetual obligation and use. (As it was particular in respect of the per-

sons to whom it was directed, whom it obliged; as it was partial and incomplete in its frame, so it was, according to its design, temporary and mutable.) This conclusion we might infer from what hath been said concerning the narrow extent, and concerning the intrinsic imperfection thereof; for supposing a new general and perfect revelation made to mankind, (such as we asserted probably should be,) that would naturally swallow and void those which are particular and imperfect; as comprehending them, it would render them useless; as supplying the defects, correcting the defaults, or removing, paring away the superfluities of them, it would discover them unfit for continuance. As rivers run into the sea, as shadows flee before the sun, so these small and shallow, these dusky and faint revelations would discharge themselves into, would vanish before a complete and universal one. Nothing in nature or in providence that is scant or defectuous, can be stable and lasting. Thus, I say, is this a conclusion, a consequence of those which preceded; but we have another more convincing sort of evidence to prove it by, (most valid *ad homines*,) even by many pregnant intimations; yea many express remonstrances and predictions, that God did intend in due time to introduce a great change in affairs of this kind; to refine and reform the state of things; to break open those inclosures, and to remove those bars of separation; to enlarge the bounds of his dominion, and to receive all nations into the fold of his most special care and love: in fine, that he would dispense a general full revelation of his mind and will, of his grace and favor to mankind, such as should not be consistent with that particular and partial law, such as implies a disannulling thereof for obligation, and disabling it for use. The holy writings of that people acquaint us that God intended 'to raise up another prophet (for extraordinariness and eminency) like to Moses, which should have words by God put into his mouth;' (new words surely, new revelations from God; for why should he with that solemnity be sent to utter stale matters?) whom they should, on peril of their lives and welfare, be particularly obliged to hearken (that is, to yield attention and obedience) unto: that 'the days should come, when the Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Israel,' different from

that which he made with their fathers after their delivery from Egypt; not to be written on stones, but impressed on men's hearts; in regard to which passage we may with the Apostle to the Hebrews well argue: 'If the first had been faultless,' and designed to abide in force, 'there would have been no place found for the second;' and, that by speaking of a new covenant, he antiquated, or declared his intention to antiquate, the old one.

'That time should be, when they should say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither should it come to mind, neither should they remember it, neither should they visit it;' they are the words of the prophet Jeremiah, concerning better times to come; wherein God 'should give them pastors according to his own heart, which should feed them with knowlege and understanding;' but in a way, it is evident, altogether different from the Jewish institution; without any regard to the ark of their covenant, that seat and emblem of God's especial presence among them.

That another priesthood should infallibly (for God swore so much) be established, not 'after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek;' (not appointed to offer carnal sacrifices, but to impart spiritual benedictions.)

That time should be, 'when God would gather all nations and tongues, and they should come and see his glory;' and out of them 'God would take (that which the Mosaical constitution would not anywise permit) for priests, and for Levites.'

That there should appear a Zion; a mountain seated above all mountains, (visible and conspicuous to all the world,) wherein God would place his perpetual residence, the seat of his worship, of his especial presence and influence, to 'which all nations should flow,' or willingly resort to learn God's will, and walk in his ways; which Zion could not be that literal one, long since desolated and disregarded; and which, however, did it stand in repute, could be no convenient receptacle, or resort, for all the world; it is surely another spiritual Zion, or mystical rock, which is prophesied of.

'That God will create new heavens and a new earth;' (a thoroughly new world, or new state of things;) such 'as

that the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind.'

That God would pour his spirit of prophecy on all flesh; (although we see the prophetical spirit hath long deserted the Jewish nation, not so much as any pretence thereto remaining.) 'That the earth should be filled with the knowlege of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;' (Judaism surely is not this knowlege, which never did, nor is ever likely to fill the earth.) That 'from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, God's name should be great among the Gentiles;' and 'in every place incense should be offered unto his name, and a pure offering.' (In every place incense, acceptable to God, should be offered; not only at Jerusalem, to which the Jewish service was confined.) That a time was 'determined to finish transgression, and make an end of sins; to make a reconciliation for iniquity, and to introduce everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy; and to anoint the most Holy.'

That God would send him, so much needed and 'desired by all nations, to whom the gathering of the people should be;' 'the Sun of righteousness, arising with salvation in his wings;' 'the Redeemer that should come to Zion;' 'the Messenger of the covenant, whom God would give for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritage;' 'the righteous Branch, to be raised up unto David; to reign and prosper, executing judgment and justice in the earth; whose name should be called, The Lord our Righteousness;' whom God 'would anoint to preach good tidings to the meek, and bind up the brokenhearted,' &c. that is, in fine, God in due time would send the Messias, to enlighten the world with a perfect instruction; to reveal God's will, and declare his mercy to mankind; to erect a universal spiritual kingdom in the minds and hearts of men, reducing them to fuller knowlege and to better obedience of God. These places of Scripture, to which many others might be added, do sufficiently evince that the Mosaical dispensation was in the design thereof mutable and transitory; that God intended, what the Apostle affirms effected by our Saviour, an abrogation of the precedent command, for its weakness and unprofitableness. Thus doth

God's design concerning the abolition of this religion appear by verbal testimonies; the same we see also declared by real effects: his providence hath made good his word; he hath not only disobliged men from that religion, but hath manifestly discountenanced it; yea, hath disabled even the most obstinate adherents in opinion and will thereto from the practice and exercise thereof, according to its primitive rules and prescriptions. Long is it (for above fifteen hundred years) since they, exiled from their ancient country, and scattered over the world, have wanted a place whither to resort, wherein to perform those most weighty parts of worship and service to God, oblation of sacrifices, incense and tithes; their tribes being confounded, the distinction of priesthood and people seems taken away; all the mysterious emblems of God's special presence, all the tokens of God's favor and endearment to them are embezzled and quite lost; nothing is left substantial or solemn in their religion, which if they would they could put in practice: all that they retain of their ancient institution is the observation of some petty formalities, in matters of less importance; which also they have so blended and corrupted with impure mixtures of their own device and forgery, false and impious opinions, ridiculous and uncouth ceremonies, idle and absurd stories, that we may justly suppose genuine Judaism nowhere to be found; that it cannot be, nor is indeed any where, practised.

So that what reason showed fit to be, what God had declared should be, that experience doth attest to be done; the cessation and abolition of that way of religion, both as to obligation and use.

So I pass over this second step of my intended discourse: that no other religion, excepting Christianity, which hath been, or is in being, can reasonably pretend to have proceeded from God, as a universal, complete, and final declaration of his mind and will to mankind. Such as we argued it probable that so wise a God, so just a Lord, so gracious a Father would sometime afford to his poor miserable creatures and children, the sons of Adam.

I have two great steps yet to take: one, that Christianity is in itself a doctrine and law endued with the forementioned con-

ditions; in all respects worthy to come from God, apt to promote his glory, and procure man's benefit. Another, that it *de facto* did proceed from God, was attested to by him, and established by his authority. Which propositions I shall hereafter, by God's grace, endeavor to prove.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XVI.

I CORINTHIANS, CHAP. II.—VERSE 6.

MEANING of the text considered; that however such parts of the Christian doctrine which St. Paul discovered unto those whom he began to instruct therein, might seem to ignorant, prejudiced, and dull or corrupt persons, foolish and unreasonable; yet that the whole doctrine, such as it is in itself, being intirely disclosed unto perfect men, (that is, to men of improved minds and good dispositions,) would be wisdom; that is, not only exactly true, but highly important, and well suited to the attainment of the best ends, &c. Some of its chief excellencies briefly recommended.

1. The first peculiar to it is, that it gives a true, proper, and complete character or notion of God; not indeed absolutely, but in respect to our condition and capacity: such a notion as agrees thoroughly with what the best reason dictates, the works of nature declare, ancient tradition attests, and common experience intimates: this topic enlarged on: inferences drawn from it favorable to Christianity.

2. A second is, that it faithfully informs us concerning ourselves, our nature, our origin, our end, &c. points about which, otherwise, by no reason, history, or experience, could we be well resolved and satisfied: what it teaches us in these respects dilated on.

3. It is a peculiar excellence of our religion, that it prescribes an accurate rule of life, most congruous to reason, and suitable to our nature; most conducive to our welfare; most

apt to promote each man's private good, and the public benefit of all, &c. Its precepts directing our practice in relation to God fully considered: those by which our deportment towards our fellow creatures should be regulated: consideration also of the laws and directions prescribed by it for the regulation of our own souls and bodies.

4. In addition to the above, this consideration may be annexed; that as it delivers so excellent and perfect a rule of life, so it delivers it unto us pure from any alloy debasing, free from any clog incumbering it; for that it chiefly requires of us only a rational and spiritual service, not withdrawing us from good practice by tedious and external rites, &c.

5. Our religion hath also this especial advantage, that it sets before us a living copy and visible standard of good practice; wherein we have all its precepts compacted, as it were, into one body, and at once exposed to our view: great efficacy of example pointed out: that of our blessed Lord fully shown.

6. Farther, our religion doth not only thus truly and fully acquaint us with our duty; but, which is another peculiar virtue thereof, it buildeth our duty on the most solid grounds, presseth it with the most valid inducements, draweth it from the best principles, and driveth it to the best ends: the advantage which it possesses over any system of philosophy, in these respects, pointed out, &c.

7. It is a peculiar advantage of Christianity, which no other law or doctrine so much as pretends to, that it not only clearly teaches, and strongly persuades us to so excellent a way of life, but provides us also with sufficient help and ability to practise it; our law is not *a dead letter*, but has *a quickening spirit* accompanying it, &c.

8. Another peculiar excellence is, that it alone can appease and satisfy a man's conscience, breeding therein well-grounded hope and comfort, healing the wounds of bitter remorse and fear, which the sense of guilt inflicts: this topic enlarged on.

9. The last advantage now mentioned of this doctrine is, that it propounds and asserts itself in a manner very convincing and satisfactory; in a plain style of speech, becoming the majesty and sincerity of divine truth; simply, without affectation or artifice; but yet with an imperious and awful confidence in its own wisdom and authority, &c. This topic enlarged on. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XVI.

OF THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I CORINTHIANS, CHAP. II.—VERSE 6.

We speak wisdom to those which are perfect.

THE meaning of these words, on viewing the context, and weighing the scope of St. Paul's discourse, I take to be in effect this; that however such parts of the Christian doctrine, which St. Paul discovered unto those whom he began to instruct therein, 'the milk which he gave the babes in Christ to drink,' especially as propounded, proved, and persuaded in so plain and simple a manner, without advantages of subtile reasoning or elegant language, might seem to persons really ignorant, unskilful, and dull of apprehension, (although much conceited of their own knowlege, wit, and reach,) or to men prepossessed with contrary notions and corrupt affections to be foolish and unreasonable: yet that the whole doctrine, such as it is in itself, being intirely disclosed unto perfect men, that is, to men of an adult and improved understanding, well disposed and capable, void of prejudicate conceits, and cleansed from vicious dispositions, would appear wisdom; wisdom, that is, not only exactly true, but highly important, and very well suited to the attainment of the best ends; even those ends, which it pretendeth to bring about, which are manifestly the most excellent

that any knowlege can aim at; the glorifying of God, and salvation of man: this I suppose to be St. Paul's assertion here; and thereof it is my intent, by God's assistance, to endeavor now some declaration and proof, by representing briefly some peculiar excellencies and perfections of our religion; which may serve to evince the truth, and evidence the wisdom thereof; to make good, that indeed our religion well deserveth the privilege it doth claim of a divine extraction, that it is not an invention of man, but, as St. Paul calleth it, 'the wisdom of God,' proceeding from no other author but the God of truth and wisdom. It is indeed a common subject, and so the best ever should be; it is always profitable, and now seasonable to inculcate it, for the confirmation of ourselves, and conviction of others, in this age of wavering and warping toward infidelity; wherefore, regarding more the real usefulness of the matter than the squeamish fancy of some auditors, I shall without scruple propound what my own meditation hath suggested about it.

1. The first excellency peculiar to the Christian doctrine I observe to be this; that it assigneth a true, proper, and complete character or notion of God; (complete, I mean, not absolutely, but in respect to our condition and capacity;) such a notion as agreeth thoroughly with what the best reason dictateth, the works of nature declare, ancient tradition doth attest, and common experience doth intimate concerning God; such a character as is apt to breed highest love and reverence in men's hearts toward him, to engage them in the strictest practice of duty and obedience to him. It ascribeth unto him all conceivable perfections of nature in the highest degree; it asserteth unto him all his due rights and prerogatives; it commendeth and justifieth to us all his actions and proceedings. For in his essence it representeth him one, eternal, perfectly simple and pure, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, independent, impassible, and immutable; as also, according to his essential disposition of will and natural manner of acting, most absolute and free, most good and benign, most holy and just, most veracious and constant; it acknowlegeth him the maker and upholder of all beings, of what nature and what degree soever; both material and immaterial, visible and invisible; it

attributeth to him supreme majesty and authority over all. It informeth us that he framed this visible world with especial regard to our use and benefit; that he preserveth it with the same gracious respect; that he governeth us with a particular care and providence; viewing all the thoughts, and ordering all the actions of men to good ends, general or particular. It declareth him in his dealings with rational creatures very tender and careful of their good, exceedingly beneficent and merciful toward them; compassionate of their evils, placable for their offences, accessible and inclinable to help them at their entreaty, or in their need; yet nowise fond or indulgent to them; not enduring them to proceed in perverse or wanton courses; but impartially just, and inflexibly severe toward all iniquity obstinately pursued; it, in short, describeth him most amiable in his goodness, most terrible in his justice, most glorious and venerable in all his ways of providence: whatever perfections in essence, state, or practice, either philosophers (by rational collection from innate notions, or from contemplation of natural effects, or on observing occurrences in human affairs) or other institutions from the relics of primitive tradition, by politic reflexion on things, from other fountains, or by other means whatever, have by parts (imperfectly, obscurely, and faintly) attributed to God, all those our religion, in a full, clear, and peremptory manner, with advantage beyond what I can express, doth ascribe and assert unto him; not intermixing therewith (as other doctrines and institutions may be observed to do) any thing unworthy of him, or misbecoming him; adjoining nothing repugnant to that which natural light discerneth or approveth; but showing somewhat beyond what it can descry, concerning God's incomprehensible nature and manner of subsistence, his unsearchable counsels of wisdom, his admirable methods of providence, whereby he hath designed to commend his goodness to us, and to glorify his justice; which sorts of truths exceeding man's reach to devise or comprehend as it becometh God (who so far transcendeth us in wisdom and knowlege) to reveal them; so they, wondrously conspiring with the perfections of God otherwise discernible by us, do argue or confirm the divinity of the doctrine, which acquainteth us with them: for a doctrine, how plausible soever, which should teach

us nothing about God, that by other means could not be found out, and whose bottom common sense might not fathom, there were no urgent cause why we should derive it from heaven, or why we should not rather deem it the invention of some witty or subtile man. But such a doctrine as this, (which as it telleth us nothing about divine things, that contradicteth reason, so it informeth us many things, which no understanding of man had ever conceived, none can penetrate,) we may justly presume to come from a superior wisdom, we must at least avow it worthy of God; in the contrivances of man's wit or fancy about things of this nature, as in divers instances it hath happened, most probably many flaws and incongruities presently would have appeared; they would have clashed with themselves, or with the dictates of common reason: that, for instance, God should out of his own bosom send down his eternal Son to partake of our nature, and appear in our flesh, that with utmost advantage he might discover God's will and merciful intentions toward us, that he might set before us an exact pattern of good life; that by his obedience and patience he might expiate our sin, and reconcile God to mankind; that he might raise in us a hope of, and lead us in the way to, happiness; this indeed is a mystery, and a depth of wisdom, which we should never have thought of, nor can yet thoroughly sound by thinking, which we better may admire, than we can understand: but neither doth good reason disallow it, nor can disprove it; yea, good reason so far confirmeth it, as it cannot but admit it to import nothing but that which is plainly true and most credible, the immense goodness and justice of God; concerning which nothing ought to seem strange or uncouth to us, since even by the care expressed in matters of ordinary providence divine goodness appeareth so unaccountably vast and high, that on consideration thereof worthily might Job and the psalmist exclaim; 'What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thy heart on him?' 'Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowlege of him? or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him?'

Now thus to instil into the minds of men a right and worthy notion of God, is palpably a great excellency of any doctrine or religion: for beside that a true knowlege of God (even

barely considered as in way of theory most perfective of our understanding, it being conversant on the noblest object of contemplation) is in itself very desirable; and on the same ground error in divine things is no small evil or defect; both these, such knowlege and such error respectively, are very considerable, as having a powerful influence on action; for according to men's conceptions about God is their practice, religious and moral, very much regulated; if men conceive well of God, they will be guided and moved thereby to render him a worship and an obedience worthy of him, and acceptable to him; if they are ignorant of him, or mistake about him, they will accordingly perform services to him, or pretences of service, which shall neither become him nor please him; (God by such misconceptions being transformed into an idol, their religion will become vile or vain superstition.) And since all men apprehend the example of God a perfect rule of action, that they cannot do better than to resemble and imitate him, such as they conceive God to be, such in good measure they will endeavor to be themselves, both in their disposition and demeanor; whence infallibly the virtues and defects which lie in their notion will exert and diffuse themselves into their life.

2. A second great excellency peculiar to the Christian institution is this, that it faithfully informeth us concerning ourselves, concerning our nature, our original, our end, all our state past, present, and final; points about which otherwise by no reason, no history, no experience, we could be well resolved or satisfied: it teacheth us that we consist of a frail mortal body, taken from the earth and fashioned by God's hand, and of an immortal spirit, derived from heaven, and breathed out of God's mouth; whereby we understand the dignity of our nature and nobleness of our descent, our near alliance and our great obligation to God; and consequently how it concerneth us to behave ourselves, both in regard to God and toward ourselves, in a manner answerable to such a relation, worthy of such a high birth and quality: it showeth us that we were originally designed by a voluntary obedience to glorify our Maker, and in so doing to partake of joy and felicity from him; that accordingly we were created in a state agreeable to those purposes, wherein we were fit to serve God, and capable

thereby ever to continue happy: but that by our unworthy distrust and wilful disobedience we cast ourselves from thence, and lapsed into this wretched state of inward blindness, error, and disorder, of outward frailty, sorrow, and trouble: it acquainteth us farther how being thus estranged from God, and exposed to the effects of his just displeasure, we are yet again, by his exceeding mercy and favor, put into a capacity of recovering ourselves, of being reinstated in a condition happy far beyond that from which we fell, by returning unto God and complying with his will declared unto us; as also how continuing obstinately in our degeneracy and disobedience we shall assuredly plunge ourselves deeper into an abyss of endless misery: it fully representeth unto us what shall be our future state and final doom, how it shall be suited to our demeanors and deserts in this life; what a strict trial, what a severe judgment, all our actions (even our passant words and our secret thoughts) must hereafter undergo; and how on the result, we shall become either exceedingly happy or extremely miserable for ever. It is indeed this doctrine only which fully resolveth us about this weighty inquiry, which hath so much perplexed all men, and with so much irresolution exercised philosophers, wherein the final end and happiness of man consisteth, and what is the way of attaining it; assuring us that it consisteth not in any of these transitory things, nor in a confluence of them all, but in the favor and the enjoyment of God, with the blessings flowing thence; that this happiness is only by a sincere and constant obedience to God's holy laws, or by the practice of such a piety and such a virtue which this doctrine prescribeth, to be obtained. These most important truths, so useful both for the satisfaction of our minds, and the direction of our lives, this doctrine unfoldeth: I call them truths, and that really they are such even their harmony and consistence between themselves, their consonancy with inferences from all sorts of principles, which we can apply for learning of truth, with what about these matters reason collecteth, tradition reporteth, experience doth imply, may well persuade us: for that man was first made and constituted in a happy state; that he was for his misbehavior detruded thence; that hence he is become so very prone to vice, and so much subject to pain; that our souls do abide after death; that after

this life there shall be a reckoning and judgment, according to which good men (who here are often much afflicted) shall be rewarded with joy, and bad men (who commonly prosper here) shall be requited with pain, the wisest men, on these grounds, always have surmised; and their rational conjectures our religion with a positive and express assertion doth establish. So great a light doth it afford (which is no small perfection thereof) to the knowlege of ourselves and our chief concernments, the objects, next to God and what concerneth him, best deserving our inquiry and information.

3. It is a peculiar excellency of our religion, that it prescribeth an accurate rule of life, most congruous to reason, and suitable to our nature; most conducible to our welfare and our content; most apt to procure each man's private good, and to promote the public benefit of all; by the strict observance whereof we shall do what is worthy of ourselves and most becoming us; yea, shall advance our nature above itself into a resemblance of the divine nature; we shall do God right, and obtain his favor; we shall oblige and benefit men, acquiring withal good-will and good respect from them; we shall purchase to ourselves all the conveniences of a sober life, and all the comforts of a good conscience. For if we first examine the precepts directive of our practice in relation to God, what can be more just, or comely, or pleasant, or beneficial to us, than are those duties of piety which our religion doth enjoin? What can be more fit than that we should most highly esteem and honor him who is most excellent? that we should bear most hearty affection to him who is in himself most good, and most beneficial to us? that we should have a most awful dread of him who is so infinitely powerful, holy, and just? that we should be very grateful unto him from whom we have received our being, with all the comforts and conveniences thereof? that we should intirely trust and hope in him who can do what he will, and will do whatever in reason we can expect from his goodness, and can never fail to perform what he hath promised? that we should render all obedience and observance to him whose children, whose servants, whose subjects we are born; by whose protection and provision we enjoy our life and livelihood? Can there be a higher privilege than liberty of access, with assurance of

being favorably received in our needs, to him who is thoroughly able to supply them? Can we desire on easier terms to receive benefits than by acknowleging our wants, and asking for them? Can there be required a more gentle satisfaction from us for our offences, than confession of them, accompanied with repentance and effectual resolution to amend? Is it not, in fine, most equal and fair that we should be obliged to promote his glory, who hath obliged himself to further our good? The practice of such a piety as it is apparently λογικὴ λατρεία, 'a reasonable service,' so it cannot but produce excellent fruits of advantage to ourselves, a joyful peace of conscience, and a comfortable hope, a freedom from all superstitious terrors and scruples, from all tormenting cares and anxieties; it cannot but draw down from God's bountiful hands showers of blessings on our heads, and of joys into our hearts; whence our obligation to these duties is not only reasonable, but very desirable.

Consider we next the precepts by which our religion doth regulate our deportment toward our neighbors and brethren; (so it styleth all men, intimating thence the duties it requireth us to perform toward them;) and what directions in that kind can be imagined comparably so good, so useful, as those which the gospel affordeth? An honest Pagan historian saith of the Christian profession, that *nil nisi justum suadet et lene;** the which is a true, though not full character thereof. It enjoineth us that we should sincerely and tenderly love one another, should earnestly desire and delight in each other's good, should heartily sympathise with all the evils and sorrows of our brethren, should be ready to yield them all the help and comfort we are able, being willing to part with our substance, our ease, our pleasure, for their benefit or succor; not confining this our charity to any sorts of men, particularly related or affected toward us, but, in conformity to our heavenly Father's boundless goodness, extending it to all; that we should mutually bear one another's burdens, and bear with one another's infirmities, mildly resent and freely remit all injuries, all discourtesies done unto us; retaining no grudge in our hearts, ex-

* Am. Marc. l. 22.

ecuting no revenge, but requiting them with good wishes and good deeds. It chargeth us to be quiet and orderly in our stations, diligent in our callings, veracious in our words, upright in our dealings, observant of our relations, obedient and respectful toward our superiors, meek and gentle to our inferiors; modest and lowly, ingenuous and compliant in our conversation, candid and benign in our censures, innocent and inoffensive, yea courteous and obliging, in all our behavior toward all persons. It commandeth us to root out of our hearts all spite and rancor, all envy and malignity, all pride and haughtiness, all evil suspicion and jealousy; to restrain our tongue from all slander, all detraction, all reviling, all bitter and harsh language; to banish from our practice whatever may injure, may hurt, may needlessly vex or trouble our neighbor. It engageth us to prefer the public good before any private convenience, before our own opinion or humor, our credit or fame, our profit or advantage, our ease or pleasure; rather discarding a less good from ourselves, than depriving others of a greater. Now who can number or estimate the benefits that spring from the practice of these duties, either to the man that observeth them, or to all men in common? *O divinest Christian charity, what tongue can worthily describe thy most heavenly beauty, thy incomparable sweetness, thy more than royal clemency and bounty? how nobly dost thou enlarge our minds beyond the narrow sphere of self and private regard into an universal care and complacence, making every man ourself, and all concernments to be ours! how dost thou entitle us unto, how dost thou invest us in, all the goods imaginable; dost enrich us with the wealth, dost prefer us with the honor, dost adorn us with the wisdom and the virtue, dost bless us with all prosperity of the world, whilst all our neighbor's good, by our rejoicing therein, becometh our own! how dost thou raise a man above the reach of all mischiefs and disasters, of all troubles and griefs, since nothing can disturb or discompose that soul, wherein thou dost constantly reside, and absolutely reign! how easily dost thou, without pain or hazard, without drawing blood or striking stroke, render him that enjoyeth thee an absolute conqueror over

* Chrys. Ἀνδρ. 19.

all his foes, triumphant over all injuries without, and all passions within; for that he can have no enemy, who will be a friend to all, and nothing is able to cross him, who is disposed to take every thing well! how sociable, how secure, how pleasant a life might we lead under thy kindly governance! what numberless sorrows and troubles, fears and suspicions, cares and distractions of mind at home, what tumults and tragedies abroad, might be prevented, if men would but hearken to thy mild suggestions! what a paradise would this world then become, in comparison to what it now is, where thy good precepts and advices being neglected, uncharitable passions and unjust desires are predominant! how excellent then is that doctrine, which brought thee down from heaven, and, would but men embrace thee, the peace and joy of heaven with thee!

If we farther survey the laws and directions which our religion prescribeth concerning the particular management of our souls and bodies in their respective actions and enjoyments, we shall also find that nothing could be devised more worthy of us, more agreeable to reason, more productive of our welfare and our content. It obligeth us to preserve unto our reason its natural prerogative, or due empire in our souls, and over our bodies, not to suffer the brutish part to usurp and domineer over us; that we be not swayed down by this earthly lump, not enslaved to bodily temper, not transported with tumultuary humors, not deluded by vain fancy; that neither inward propensions nor impressions from without be able to seduce us to that which is unworthy of us, or mischievous to us. It enjoineth us to have sober and moderate thoughts concerning ourselves, suitable to our total dependence on God, to our natural meanness and weakness, to our sinful inclinations, to the guilt we have contracted in our lives; that therefore we be not puffed up with self-conceit, or vain confidence in ourselves, or in any thing about us; (any wealth, honor, or prosperity.) It directeth us also to compose our minds into a calm, serene, and cheerful state; that we be not easily distempered with anger, or distracted with care, or overborne with grief, or disturbed with any accident befalling us; but that we be content in every condition, and entertain patiently all events, yea, accept joyfully from God's hand whatever he reacheth to us. It com-

mandeth us to restrain our appetites, to be temperate in all our enjoyments, to abstain from all irregular pleasures, which are base in kind, or excessive in degree; which may corrupt our minds, or impair our health, or endamage our estate, or stain our good name, or prejudice our peace or repose: it doth not prohibit us the use of any creature, whence we may receive innocent convenience or delight, but indulgeth us a prudent and sober use of them all, with the sense of God's goodness, and thankfulness to him, who bestoweth them on us. Our religion also farther ordereth us (so far as our necessary occasions or duties permit) to sequester and elevate our minds from these low and transitory things, from the fading glories, the unstable possessions, the vanishing delights of this world; things indeed unworthy the attention, unworthy the affection of an heaven-born and immortal spirit; that we should fix our thoughts, our desires, our endeavors on objects most worthy of them, objects high and heavenly, pure and spiritual, infinitely stable and durable; not to love the world, and the things therein; to be careful for nothing, but to cast all our care on God's providence; not to labor for the meat that perisheth, not to trust in uncertain riches; to have our treasure, our heart, our hope, our conversation above in heaven. Such directions our religion prescribeth; by compliance with which, if man be at all capable of being happy, assuredly his happiness must be attained; for that no present enjoyment can render a man happy, all experience proclaimeth: the restless motions we continually see, the woful complaints we daily hear, do manifestly demonstrate.

And who seeth not the great benefits and the goodly fruits accruing from observance of these laws and rules? Who discerneth not the admirable consent of all these particular injunctions in our religion with that general one, 'Whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are honest, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, or any praise, that we should mind such things,' and practice them? Such, and far more excellent than I am able to describe, is the rule of Christian practice; a rule in perfection, in beauty, in efficacy far surpassing all other rules; productive of a goodness more

complete, more lovely, more sprightful than any other doctrine or institution hath been or can be able to bring forth; much exceeding, not only 'the righteousness of blind Pharisees,' but all the virtue of the most sage philosophers; somewhat in part concurrent therewith philosophy hath descried and delivered; (it is no wonder it should, since all of it is so plainly consonant to reason;) yet what philosophy hath in this kind afforded, is in truth, if compared with what our religion teacheth, exceedingly meagre, languid, and flat: two words here, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself,' do signify more, do contain in them more sense and savor, to the judgment and relish of a well disposed mind, than the Ethics of Aristotle, the Offices of Cicero, the Precepts and Dissertations of Epictetus, the many other volumes of philosophical morality all put together; in matter our rule is far more rich and full, more sweet and sapid than theirs; in force and efficacy it doth also (as we shall hereafter see) far excel them.

4. We may hereto annex this consideration, which may pass for another peculiar advantage of our religion, that as it delivereth so excellent and perfect a rule of life, so it delivereth it unto us pure from any alloy debasing, free of any clog incumbering it; for that it chiefly, and in a manner only requireth of us a rational and spiritual service, consisting in performance of substantial duties, plainly necessary or profitable; not withdrawing us from the practice of solid piety and virtue by obligations to a tedious observance of many external rites; not spending the vigor of our minds on superficial formalities, (or busy scrupulosities, as Tertullian termeth them,*) such as serve only to amuse childish fancies, or to depress slavish spirits. It supposeth us men, men of good understanding and ingenuous disposition, and dealeth with us as such; and much more such it rendereth us, if we comply therewith. The ritual observances it enjoineth are as few in number, in nature simple and easy to perform, so evidently reasonable, very decent, and very useful; apt to instruct us in, able to excite us unto, the practice of most wholesome duties: which consideration show-

* In Marc. 2.

eth this doctrine to be complete, suitable to the most adult age and best constitution, to the most ripe and improved capacities of man. But farther,

5. Our religion hath also this especial advantage, that it setteth before us a living copy and visible standard of good practice; wherein we have all its precepts compacted as it were into one body, and at once exposed to our view. Example yieldeth the most compendious instruction, together with the most efficacious incitement to action; but never was there or could be any example in either respect comparable to this; never was any so thoroughly perfect in itself, so purposely designed, so fitly accommodated for imitation, or so forcibly engaging thereto, as this: there is not one flaw, one spot, one false or uneven stroke in all this copy, so that we are secure from doing amiss in transcribing any part thereof; it was intended to conduct us through all the parts of duty, especially those which are most high and difficult to our frail and decayed nature, general charity, self-denial, humility, and patience: it was admirably squared for the imitation of all men, the person in whom it shined being, as it were, indefinite, and unrestrained to any single condition; he being in right and power superior to the greatest princes, though according to choice and in outward parts inferior to the meanest subjects; having under his command the largest wealth, although enjoying none; being able readily to procure to himself what glory and respect he pleased, yet pleasing to pass obscure and disregarded; so teaching those of highest rank to be sober and condescensive, those of lowest degree to be patient and content in their respective states; teaching all men not to rest in, nor much to regard, these present things, but singly in all their doings above all things to seek God's honor, with main resolution and diligence to prosecute his service: and as to all degrees, so to all capacities, was his practice suited, being neither austere nor remiss, formal nor singular, careless nor boisterous; but in a moderate, even, and uniform course so tempered, that persons of all callings and all complexions easily might follow him in the practice of all true righteousness, in the performance of all substantial duties toward God and toward man. It is also an example attended with the greatest obligations and induce-

ments to follow it; the great excellency and high dignity of the person, being the most holy, first-born Son of God, heir of eternal majesty; our manifold relations to him, being our Lord and Master, our best friend, our most gracious Redeemer; the many inestimable benefits received by us from him, all that redemption from extreme misery, and capacity of perfect happiness do import, are so many potent arguments engaging us to imitate him.

6. Farther, our religion doth not only thus truly and fully acquaint us with our duty; but, which is another peculiar virtue thereof, it buildeth our duty on most solid grounds, presseth it with most valid inducements, draweth it from the best principles, and driveth it to the best ends: no philosophy can in any measure represent virtue so truly estimable and eligible, can assign so evident and cogent reason why we should embrace it and strictly adhere thereto, can so well discover or describe the excellent fruits that grow on it, as doth this philosophy of ours, as the ancient Fathers are wont to call it. Other philosophies have indeed highly commended virtue, and vehemently exhorted thereto; but the grounds on which they laid its praise are very sandy, the arguments by which they enforced its practice are very feeble, the principles from which they deduced it, and the ends which they propounded thereto, are very poor and mean, if we discuss them; at least if they be compared with ours: virtue, said they, is a thing of itself, on account of its own native beauty and worth, abstracting from all reward or profit springing from it, very admirable and desirable; it is beside a very pleasant and very useful thing, begetting tranquillity and satisfaction of mind; yielding health, safety, reputation, pleasure, quiet, and other manifold conveniences of life: but can so magnificent and so massy a fabric of commendation stand firm on such foundations as these? are these principles of love and admiration toward we know not what, these ends of temporal advantage and convenience, so noble or worthy? are the accommodations of this short and uncertain life a proper encouragement or a just recompense for the laborious achievements of true virtue? are these weapons sufficient to fortify men, or these discourses able to animate them in resisting the temptations which avert from virtue, or

avoiding the enchantments which allure to vice? Will men, I say, readily, for the sake of an imaginary or insensible thing, (a goodly name only, for all they see,) which representeth no more of benefit attending it, cross the bent of their natural inclinations, forfeit their present ease, reject certain fruitions of pleasure, waive occasions of getting to themselves profit, honor, and power, goods so manifestly substantial and grateful to nature? will they undergo contentedly the difficulties, encounter the dangers, sustain the pains, the disgraces, the losses commonly incident to virtue? No surely, when it cometh to earnest trial, it will hardly seem reason or wisdom so to do. But the Christian doctrine, as it compriseth, and in an inferior order urgeth also such grounds and arguments, so it doth exhibit others far more solid and forcible: it commendeth goodness to us, not only as agreeable to man's imperfect and fallible reason, but as conformable to the perfect goodness of God, as the dictate of his infallible wisdom, as the resolution of his most holy will; as enjoined by his unquestionable authority, as our indispensable duty, and only way to happiness: the principles, from which it willeth us to act, are love, reverence, and gratitude to God, hearty good-will toward men, and a sober regard to our own true welfare; the ends which it prescribeth are God's honor, public edification, and the salvation of our own souls: it stirreth us to good practice, by minding us that we shall thereby resemble the Supreme Goodness, shall express our gratitude toward that great Benefactor, unto whom we owe all that we have; shall discharge our duty, pay due honor, perform faithful service to our Almighty Lord and King; that we shall thereby surely decline the wrath and displeasure of God, shall surely obtain his favor and mercy, with all sorts of blessings needful or profitable for us; that we shall not only avoid regrets and terrors of conscience here, but escape endless miseries and torments; we shall not only procure present comfort and peace of mind, but shall acquire crowns of everlasting glory and bliss. These surely are the truest and firmest grounds on which a right estimation of virtue can subsist; these are motives incomparably most effectual to the embracing thereof; these are the purest fountains whence it can spring, the noblest marks whither it can aim; a virtue so

grounded, so reared, is certainly most sound and genuine, most firm and stable, most infinitely beneficial. But farther,

7. It is a peculiar advantage of Christianity, (which no other law or doctrine so much as pretendeth to,) that it not only clearly teacheth us and strongly persuadeth us to so excellent a way of life, but provideth also sufficient help and ability to practise it; without which (such is the frailty of our nature, as experience proveth, that) all instruction, all exhortation, all encouragement, would avail little. Other laws, for want of this, are in effect 'ministries of condemnation,' racks of conscience, parents of guilt and of regret; reading hard lessons, but not assisting to do after them; imposing heavy burdens, but not enabling to bear them: our law is not such; it is not a dead letter, but hath a quickening spirit accompanying it; it not only soundeth through the ear, but stampeth itself on the heart of him that sincerely doth embrace it; it always carrieth with it a sure guide to all good, and a safe guard from all evil: if our mind be doubtful or dark, it directeth us to a faithful oracle, where we may receive counsel and information: if our passions are unruly, if our appetites are outrageous, if temptations be violent, and threaten to overbear us, it leadeth us to a full magazine, whence we may furnish ourselves with all manner of arms to withstand and subdue them: if our condition, in respect to all other means, be disconsolate or desperate, it sendeth us to a place where we shall not fail of refreshment and relief; it offereth, on our earnest seeking and asking, the wisdom and strength of God himself for our direction, our aid, our support and comfort, in all exigencies. To them, who with due fervency and constancy ask it, God hath in the gospel promised to 'grant his holy Spirit,' to guide them in their ways, to admonish them of their duty, to strengthen them in obedience, to guard them from surprises and assaults of temptation, to sustain them, and cheer them in afflictions. This advantage, as it is proper to our religion, so it is exceedingly considerable; for what would the most perfect rule or way signify, without as well a power to observe it, as a light to discern it? and how came man, (so ignorant, so impotent, so inconstant a creature; so easily deluded by false appearances, and transported with disorderly passions; so easily shaken

and unsettled by any small assault,) either alone without some guidance perceive, or by himself without some assistance prosecute, what is good for him, especially in cases of intricacy and difficulty? how should he who hath frequent experience of his own weakness, not be utterly disheartened and cast into despair either of standing fast in a good state, or of recovering himself from a bad one; of rescuing himself from any vicious inclination, or attaining any virtuous habit, if he did not apprehend such a friendly power vigilantly guarding him, ready on all occasions to succor and abet him? this consideration it is, which only can nourish our hope, can excite our courage, can quicken and support our endeavor in religious practice, by assuring us that there is no duty so hard, which by the grace vouchsafed us we may not achieve; that there is no enemy so mighty, which by the help afforded us we cannot master; so that, although we find ourselves 'able to do nothing of ourselves, yet we can do all things by Christ that strengtheneth us.'

8. Another peculiar excellency of our religion is this, that it alone can appease and satisfy a man's conscience, breeding therein a well-grounded hope and a solid comfort; healing the wounds of bitter remorse and anxious fear, which the sense of guilt doth inflict: 'There is no man,' as King Solomon said, and all men know, 'who sinneth not;' who doth not find himself in thought, word, and deed, frequently thwarting the dictates of reason, violating the laws of piety and justice, transgressing the bounds of sobriety; who consequently doth not in his own judgment condemn himself of disorder, and of offence committed against the world's great Lawgiver and Governor, the just Patron of right and goodness; who thence doth not deem himself obnoxious to God's wrath, and is not fearful of deserved punishment from him: which fear must needs be fostered and augmented by considering, that as past facts are irrevocable, so guilt is indelible, and punishment, except by the voluntary remission of him that is offended, inevitable; as also that there are no visible means of removing or abating such guilt by any reparation or amends that he can make, who is more apt to accumulate new offences, than able to compensate for what he hath committed: now in such a case, some man

indeed may frame to himself hopes of mercy; may from the experience of God's forbearance to punish, and continuance of his bounty to sinners, presume that God is placable, and will not be rigorous in his proceedings with him; may hopefully guess that in favor God will admit his endeavors at repentance, will accept the compensations he offereth in lieu of his duty, may suffer his guilt to be atoned by the sacrifices he presenteth; yet can no man on such presumptions ground a full confidence that he shall find mercy; he cannot however be satisfied on what terms mercy will be granted, in what manner it shall be dispensed, or how far it shall extend; God never having exhibited any express declarations or promises to those purposes; no man therefore can otherwise than suspect himself to be in a bad state, or esteem himself secure from the pursuits of justice and wrath; as he knoweth that 'sin lieth at the door,' so he cannot know but that vengeance may lie near it; hence common reason, as well as the Jewish law, is a ministry of death, and a killing letter, carrying nothing in the looks or language thereof but death and ruin; hence is a man (if at least he be not besotted into a careless stupidity) shut up in an irksome bondage of spirit, under the grievous tyranny, if not of utter despair, yet of restless suspicion about his condition; which as it quencheth in his mind all steady peace and joy, so it dampeth his courage and alacrity, it enervateth his care and industry to do well, he doubting what success and what acceptance his undertakings may find; it also cooleth in him good affections towards God, whom that he hath offended he knoweth, and questioneth whether he can be able to reconcile.

From this unhappy plight our religion thoroughly doth rescue us, assuring us that God Almighty is not only reconcilable, but desirous, on good terms, to become our friend, himself most frankly proposing overtures of grace, and soliciting us to close with them; it on our compliance tendereth, under God's own hand and seal, a full discharge of all guilts and debts, however contracted; it receiveth a man into perfect favor and friendship, if he doth not himself wilfully reject them, or resolve to continue at distance, in estrangement and enmity toward God. It proclaimeth that, if we be careful to amend, God will not be 'extreme to mark what we do amiss;' that iniquity, if we do

not incorrigibly affect and cherish it, 'shall not be our ruin;' that although by our infirmity we fall often, yet by our repentance we may rise again, and by our sincerity shall stand upright; that our endeavors to serve and please God (although imperfect and defective, if serious and sincere) will be accepted by him: this is the tenor of that great covenant between heaven and earth, which the Son of God did procure by his intercession, did purchase by his merits of wonderful obedience and patience, did ratify and seal by his blood; did publish to mankind, did confirm by miraculous works, did solemnise by holy institutions, doth by the evangelical ministry continually recommend to all men; so that we can nowise doubt of its full accomplishment on God's part, if we be not deficient on ours: so to our inestimable benefit and unspeakable comfort doth our religion ease their conscience, and encourage them in the practice of their duty, who do sincerely embrace it, and firmly adhere thereto.

9. The last advantage which I shall mention of this doctrine is this; that it propoundeth and asserteth itself in a manner very convincing and satisfactory: it propoundeth itself in a style and garb of speech as accommodate to the general capacity of its hearers, so proper to the authority which it claimeth, becoming the majesty and sincerity of divine truth; it expresseth itself plainly and simply, without any affectation or artifice, without ostentation of wit or eloquence, such as men study to insinuate and impress their devices by: it also speaketh with an imperious and awful confidence, such as argueth the speaker satisfied both of his own wisdom and authority; that he doubteth not of what he saith himself, that he knoweth his hearers obliged to believe him; its words are not like the words of a wise man, who is wary and careful that he slip not into mistake, (interposing therefore now and then his may-be's and perchances,) nor like the words of a learned scribe, grounded on semblances of reason, and backed with testimonies; nor as the words of a crafty sophister, who by long circuits, subtile fetches, and sly trains of discourse doth inveigle men to his opinion; but like the words of a king, carrying with them authority and power uncontrollable, commanding forthwith attention, assent, and obedience; this you are to believe, this you are to do, on

pain of our high displeasure, at your utmost peril be it; your life, your salvation dependeth thereon: such is the style and tenor thereof, plainly such as becometh the sovereign Lord of all to use, when he shall please to proclaim his mind and will unto us. It freeth us from laborious and anxious inquiries, from endless disputes and janglings, from urging ineffectual arguments, and answering cross difficulties, &c. It doth also assert itself and approve its truth to the reason of man the most advantageously that can be; with proofs most suitable to itself, and in themselves most effectual; waiving those inferior methods of subtile argumentation and plausible language with which men are wont to confirm or set off their conceits; which how weak they are, how unfit to maintain truth, their unsuccessfulness doth evince; seeing by those means scarce any man hath been able thoroughly either to settle himself in or to draw others to a full persuasion concerning any important truth discosted from sense: such methods therefore the Christian doctrine hath waived, (or rather slighted, as beneath itself,) applying arguments to the demonstration of its truth, far more potent, more sublime, and indeed truly divine; beside its intrinsic worth, or the excellency shining in itself, (which speaketh it worthy of God, and goeth more than half way in proving it to proceed from him,) there is no kind of attestation needful or proper, which God hath not afforded thereto; God is in himself invisible and undiscernible to any sense of ours, neither could we endure the lustre and glory of his immediate presence; it must be therefore by effects of his incommunicable power, by works extraordinary and supernatural, (such as no creature can perform or counterfeit,) that he must, if ever, convincingly signify his purpose or pleasure to us; and such innumerable hath God vouchsafed to yield in favor and countenance of our religion; by clearly predicting and presignifying the future revelation of this doctrine by express voices and manifest apparitions from heaven, by suspending and thwarting the course of natural causes in many ways and instances, by miracles of providence no less remarkable than those of nature, by internal attestations to the minds and consciences of men; things too great slightly to be passed over, and the particular mention of which I must therefore now omit; by such wonderful means, I say,

hath God taken care to convince us that our religion came from him, which is a peculiar advantage that it hath, such as no other institution (except that of the Jews, which was a prelude thereto, and whose truth serveth to confirm it) can reasonably pretend unto; and a great perfection it is thereof, since as it is no small content to a traveller, by a direction which he can fully confide in, to know that he is in the right way to his journey's end; so it cannot but prove an exceeding satisfaction and encouragement to us to be assured, by infallible testimony of God himself, that our religion is the true and direct way unto eternal happiness.

These considerations may, I conceive, be sufficient, as to vindicate our religion from all aspersions cast on it either by inconsiderate and injudicious, or by vain and dissolute persons; so to confirm us all in the esteem, and incite us to the practice thereof; which use of them God in his mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom for ever be all praise. Amen.

Now 'the God of grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus—make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Amen.

'Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.'

SUMMARY OF SERMON XVII.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

As for the name of *Messias*, there is evident reason why it should not be openly expressed in the ancient predictions: this shown.

It was anciently a method of Divine Providence to impose on persons, destined to be especial subjects of his favor, and ministers of his glory, names answerable thereto: this shown in several instances.

This method with great reason we may suppose would be used by the same Divine Being, in assigning a name to that person, whom, from the beginning of things, he had promised, &c.

Now since of all the Messias's performances none was to be more signal than that of *saving*, inasmuch as he was to be the Saviour of the world, &c., the name *Jesus*, which was imparted by particular revelation, was very appropriate to the Messias.

It was indeed a name not in its immediate application altogether new; yet it was questionless by God's providence, or by Moses, through divine instinct, first produced with relation to the Messias: farther shown to be most apposite to him.

That Jesus (he whose birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, are related in the evangelical histories) is *the Christ*, is the principal article of pure faith, virtually comprehending all other doctrines of great moment: this explained.

It is therefore very requisite that we should well understand

the meaning thereof, and that we should be firmly persuaded of its truth. The following method observed in the ensuing discourses on this subject.

1. The notion and reason of this name or title, *Christ*, is explained.

2. It is shown that there was by God's appointment to come into the world one person, signally that which the name imports, *the very Christ*. 3. That *Jesus* was that person. 4. It is explained, in what manner and respects, and to what purposes, Jesus, in the New Testament is represented as *Christ*. 5. Some practical application of the point is made.

I. For the first particular. *Christ* is a name or title, importing office and dignity, being the same with Messias; that in Greek, this in Hebrew, signifying *the Anointed*. Of ancient times, in the Eastern countries, which abounded with the finest oil and odoriferous spices, it seems generally to have been the custom (and it was such among the Jews) to separate or consecrate persons, and things also, designed to any great or extraordinary employment, by anointing them with ointments composed of those ingredients: reason of this given: instances also of prophets, priests, and kings so anointed. These things being considered, it appears that the name *Christ* imports a person in a special and signal manner designed and ordained by God to one, or some, or all of these charges and functions; an extraordinary king, a great priest, and an eminent prophet.

II. Now that there was a person supereminently endued with all these characters, (a *Christ* in all these respects,) decreed by God in due time to come into the world to accomplish the vast purposes answerable to the title, many express passages in the ancient Scriptures declare.

That such a prophet should be sent, Moses in express terms foretold (Deut. xviii. 15. 18.): and the latter prophets agree with him: this shown.

The ancient Scriptures do also plainly signify, concerning

the same person, that he should be a great prince, constituted by God to govern his people for ever, in righteousness, peace, and prosperity, &c.: so Isaiah ix. 6. xi. 10. &c. Other scriptural passages quoted to this purpose.

That he also should assume and execute the priestly function, may be learned from prophetical instruction: instances given.

These things being considered, it is no wonder that the ancient Jews (though the text of Scripture doth perhaps only once explicitly and directly apply the name of *Christ* or *Messias* to this illustrious person so prophesied of and promised,) did especially assign the title to him: this point enlarged on: instances quoted of their applying to him the character of Prince and Prophet. That the Messias in their opinion was also to be a priest, is not so clearly apparent; yet it may be probably inferred: this explained. Thus, according to the ancient Scriptures, interpreted and backed by the current tradition and general consent of God's people, it is sufficiently apparent that a Messias (according to the notion promised) was to come into the world.

III. Now farther, that Jesus, whom we acknowlege, was indeed that Messias, may appear plainly from the perfect correspondency of all circumstances belonging to the Messias's appearance, of all characters suiting his person; of all things to be performed by him; of whatever was to be consequent on his presence and performances, according to ancient predictions, &c.; which things cannot possibly suit with any other person that hath come, or may be expected to come.

Among circumstances the most considerable, is the time, which did fully agree to Jesus: this shown.

Other circumstances also explained: the family out of which he was to be born; the place where he was to be born; the manner in which he was to be born. All these shown accurately to correspond with Jesus.

The state and condition also, in which the Messias was predicted to appear, shown to agree with that in which Jesus appeared.

The same observed concerning the qualities and endowments of the Messias's personal character, such as should dispose and fit him for his great task, &c. His supereminent piety and sanctity, with perfect innocence and integrity, implied in all descriptions of his person and performances; wherein an unspotted innocence, an excellent faculty of speaking and teaching, &c.; an invincible fortitude; a most quiet and peaceable disposition; an exceeding meekness and gentleness; a marvellous humility; an unparalleled patience; an inconceivable charity; in fine, all virtue and all goodness, suitable to his character, do shine with transcendent lustre. His performances are next to be considered. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XVII.

THAT JESUS IS THE TRUE MESSIAS.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

——Proving that this is the very Christ.

As for the name of Messias, there is evident reason why it should not be openly expressed in the ancient predictions; it being an easy thing for any persons, out of imposture or wantonness, to have assumed that name; and consequently it would not have suited so well the true person. It was therefore more expedient that his name should rather only be covertly signified or intimated; it was sufficient that a name should be imposed on him well agreeing to his office and chief performances. There be indeed several names attributed to the Messias; 'They shall call his name Immanuel,' said Isaiah; 'This is his name, whereby he shall be called,' 'The Lord our Righteousness,' (*Jehovah tsidkenu;*) and, 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,' said Isaiah again; but it is apparent that these were not intended to be so much his proper names, as attributes or epithets congruous unto him in regard to the eminency of his person and performances.

The prophet Zechariah seemeth also (insisting in the footsteps of Isaiah and Jeremiah) to assign him the name Netser, (or the Branch;) 'Behold the man whose name is The

Branch :' but this only denoted an appellation suiting him, as derived from the stock of David, and might beside mystically allude to some circumstance concerning him. It doth not therefore appear that the one proper name, by which the Messias, as the Son of man, should be known and called, is directly forementioned; yet it is reasonable to suppose that God would have an especial care that he should have one befitting him. It was one of the seven things which the Talmudists say were constituted before the world: the law, repentance, paradise, hell, the throne of glory, the sanctuary, the name of the Messias; according to that in the seventy-second Psalm, verse 17. *Ante solem primum nomen ejus;* so it seems they read it: the LXX. have it, *πρὸ τοῦ ἡλίου διαμενεῖ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.*

It was anciently a method of Divine Providence to impose on persons (destinated by God to be especial subjects of his favor and eminent ministers of his glory) names answerable to the nature of their employment, or to the design which was by their means and ministry to be accomplished. Whereby as God's care and providence over human affairs was declared, so men on the mention of such names were admonished to consider the divine benefits, and the duties correspondent to them. The particular reason of imposing such names is sometime expressly set down; as in the cases of Seth, Abraham, Israel, Solomon; sometime it seems tacitly implied, the actions of the persons interpreting the reason of their names, as in Melchizedek, Joshua, Malachi, and perhaps in many others.

This method with great reason we may suppose that the same divine wisdom would use in assigning a name to that person, whom from the beginning of things he had promised, and before the foundation of the world had designed to sanctify and send into the world, for achieving the most high and excellent design that ever, for the glory of God and the good of his creation, was to be undertaken in this world. Most fit it would be that God himself should be his godfather; that he should have no ordinary, no casual, no insignificant name; but such an one, which being heard might instruct and admonish us, might raise in us a sense of God's infinite mercy and bounty toward us; might breed love in our hearts, and impress vene-

ration on our minds toward him, who should bear that auspicious and comfortable name; that name, which, as the spouse of the mystical Solomon in her mystical song did sing, is 'as an ointment poured forth,' full of most wholesome and most pleasant fragrancy.

Now since of all the Messias's performances none was to be more signal than that of saving; to publish, to purchase, to effect salvation, were to be (according to what the prophets expressly and frequently say) his peculiar works; to be the Saviour of the world was (as we before touched, according to the common opinion of the Jews) a proper attribute of his.

Wherefore the name Jesus (which we are told in the gospel was by direction from God imparted by particular revelation, brought by an archangel from heaven, imposed on our Lord) did very well suit the Messias. No other name could be more sweet or acceptable; no other name could better become him, who was to redeem men from all their enemies, their slaveries, their errors, their sins, their miseries.

It was indeed a name not in its immediate application altogether new, for many others had borne it: Jesus, the son of Justus, we have mentioned in St. Paul; Jesus the son of Sirach, that excellent writer, we know; and divers others so named occur in Josephus: yet was it questionless by God's providence, or by Moses, by divine instinct, first produced with relation to the Messias; 'Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua,' saith the text: being in a mysterious exchange from a former name assigned to the famous Jesus (as not only Bensirach, but the Apostle to the Hebrews write him) the son of Nun, who of all the ancient types did most exactly (in office and performance) represent and presignify the Messias; being, as Bensirach speaks, 'great for the saving of God's elect;' whose actions are wonderfully congruous to those which we attribute to our Jesus. For, by the way, to show the resemblance, (omitting less and more nice congruities,) as Joshua did bring the good report, and evangelised concerning the promised land, (when other false or faint inquirers defamed it, and discouraged the people from entering;) as he was educated under Moses, and served him faithfully; as he succeeded in the admi-

nistration and government of God's people, perfecting what Moses had begun of deliverance and settlement to them; as he brought the Israelites (not that old disbelieving, mutinous, and repining generation, but a new progeny of better disposed people) finally out of the wilderness into Canaan, by God's miraculous assistance, subduing their enemies, and establishing them in a quiet possession of the promised land, allotting unto each tribe its inheritance; and as he did re-circumcise the children of Israel: so did our heavenly Jesus first make a true and faithful discovery concerning the mystical land of promise (that better country) flowing with spiritual milk and honey, (abundant with all spiritual comforts and pleasures, for the food, sustenance, and refreshment of our souls.) He was born under the law, and submitted to its injunctions, fulfilling all righteousness. He survived it, (the part of it which was purely Mosaical and arbitrary,) and did complete it. He doth conduct God's regenerate people (such as believe, and willingly follow him) out of the desert state of error, guilt, and sin, into the superior state of happy rest and joy, with miraculous power and efficacy; vanquishing all the spiritual Amorites, (the devil, world, and flesh,) which infest, obstruct, and oppose them; settling them in a perpetual, undisturbed, and immovable enjoyment of that blissful region; having also by a spiritual circumcision prepared and consecrated them to God. Our Saviour therefore, not only when he at last in fulness of truth did come into the world, but anciently in type and shadow, may be supposed to have received this name Jesus, conferred on him in the person of Joshua, his most illustrious representative. It certainly was most apposite to the Messias.

That Jesus (that Person, whose birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension hence, are related in the evangelical histories) is 'the Christ,' is the principal article of pure faith; the most peculiar doctrine of our religion as such, and as distinct from all other religions: it indeed virtually comprehends all other doctrines of moment therein, regarding either faith or practice. For that our being persuaded that 'Jesus is the Christ,' implies that we apprehend ourselves obliged to embrace for truth whatever was taught by him and his Apostles,

to obey all his laws, to rely on him for attainment of all the mercies, and blessings, and rewards, which he promised to dispense, in that order and on those terms, which the gospel declareth. Whence to the hearty belief of this point such great commendations are given, so high rewards are offered, so excellent privileges are annexed in the Scriptures. Whence also the declaring, proving, and persuading this doctrine was the chief matter of the Apostles' preaching, as both their profession and practice do show. 'The Jews,' saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, 'require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ, that was crucified.' And, 'I determined,' saith he again of himself, 'not to know any thing among you,' (that is, not to discover any other knowlege, not to insist on any other subject,) 'save Jesus Christ, even him that was crucified.' This, St. John tells us, was the drift of his writing the gospel, (which is a more extensive and durable way of preaching.) 'These things,' saith he, 'were written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ.' And their practice, suitable to such professions, is apparent in divers passages of this book, wherein their acts and their discourses are reported. This text particularly represents the scope to which St. Paul mainly directed his preaching, which was the maintenance and persuasion of this point, that 'Jesus is the Christ.'

It is therefore very requisite that we should well understand the meaning thereof, and that we should firmly be persuaded of its truth. To which purpose I shall endeavor, by God's assistance, to imitate St. Paul's practice here, who did συμβιβάζειν, (that is the Greek word here signifying primarily to put or bring things together, and thence in a way of collection or argumentation to teach,) who, I say, did instruct his auditors, collecting it from testimonies of ancient Scripture, and confirming it by arguments grounded thereon. In performing which I shall observe this method:

1. I shall explain the notion and reason of this name or title, 'Christ.'

2. I shall show (that which is here tacitly supposed) that there was by God's appointment to be, or to come into the world from God, one Person, signally that which this name or title imports, ὁ Χριστὸς, 'the very Christ.'

3. I shall argue that Jesus was that Person.

4. I shall explain in what manner, in what respects, to what purposes, Jesus in the New Testament is represented as Christ.

5. I shall make some practical application of the point.

I. For the first particular. Christ is a name or title importing office and dignity; being the same with Messias, that in Greek, this in Hebrew, signifying the Anointed; the which appellation we find attributed to several persons on the following ground: Of ancient times, in the eastern countries, (abounding as with good oil, so with many delicate odoriferous spices,) it seems generally to have been the manner, (as from Hazael the Syrian his being anointed may probably be collected,) it was however such among the Jews, to separate or consecrate persons, and things also I might add, designed to any great or extraordinary employment, by anointing them with ointments composed of those ingredients; they symbolising or denoting thereby, as it seems, both a plentiful effusion on them of gifts and faculties qualifying them for such services; and also a comfortable and pleasant diffusion of good and grateful effects expected from them; (from the use of things, the performances of persons thus sanctified.) 'Thy name,' saith the spouse in the Canticles, 'is as ointment poured forth;' that is, thy name is very delightful, very acceptable. And 'Behold,' saith David, commending brotherly love and concord, 'how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: it is like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard;' so good and pleasant were those employments hoped to be, to which men were by such unction inaugurated. We find especially three sorts of persons to whom this consecration did, by divine appointment, belong; kings, priests, and prophets; persons by whose ministry God of old did manage his intercourse with men, in governing them and communicating his blessings to them, both in an ordinary way (so he used kings and priests) and in an extraordinary manner, therein he employed prophets; which sorts of persons are therefore styled God's anointed; kings and priests more frequently, but sometimes also prophets; as in that of the psalm; 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no

harm;' where prophets and the anointed of God do seem to denote the same thing, and one to expound the other: however they belong to the same persons; for Abraham, whom together with the other patriarchs those words concern, is expressly called a prophet. ('Now therefore,' saith the text, 'restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live.') And that Isaac was a prophet, the Apostle to the Hebrews intimates, saying; 'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.' The same is plain of Jacob, who before his death uttered many great and remarkable predictions. The patriarchs therefore probably as prophets were styled 'God's anointed.' But to remark somewhat of these great offices, and their anointing singly:

For priests, although at first all the sons of Aaron were thus consecrated, according to that law in Exodus, 'Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office;' yet the Jewish masters tell us that afterward in all the course of times only the high-priest was so consecrated. Whence by the anointed, or the priest that is anointed, is, say they, meant the high-priest, in distinction from other inferior priests.

For kings, the Jewish doctors also (as Master Selden reports) do tell us that such of them who in a legal, orderly, and unquestioned course of right did succeed into the kingdom, were not themselves in person anointed, (they being conceived to derive a sufficient consecration from their ancestors;) but all those who in an extraordinary way by special designation, (as Saul, David, Jehu, Hazael,) or on a doubtful and controverted, or opposed title, (as Solomon and Joas,) did assume the royal charge, were thus initiated: (how ancient also the custom of anointing princes was, may be seen from that expression in Jotham's parable; 'The trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, Reign thou over us.')

As for prophets, we do not find that they were commonly, or according to ordinary rule, anointed; but one plain instance we have of Elisha, substituted to Elijah, (the chief of prophets in his time,) in this manner: 'Elisha,' it is said by God, 'the

son of Shaphat, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room;' who was thus consecrated, probably, because he was to be a prophet more than ordinary, endued with higher gifts, and designed to greater actions than common prophets were then; or perhaps because he was to be the archprophet, or head of the prophets at that time.

We may also farther observe that some persons, who (in probability) did not partake any material unction, but were yet destinated by God, and qualified and employed as special instruments of his providence or grace for producing effects suitable to any of those offices, have been therefore styled 'God's anointed.' On which score the patriarchs (by whom God's true religion was maintained and conveyed) do seem to have been called God's anointed. And king Cyrus (whose ministry God used in the re-edifying his temple and refreshing his people) is therefore termed God's Christ, or anointed; ('Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus my Christ;' τῷ Χριστῷ μου Κύρῳ·) the name of the sign being imparted to persons who were endued with the qualities, or did perform the effects signified thereby.

These things being considered, it appeareth that the name Christ doth import a person in a special and signal manner designed and ordained by God to one, or some, or all of these charges and functions; an extraordinary king, or a great priest, or an eminent prophet; or one in whom either more or all of these did concur. So much may suffice for the notion and reason of this title, 'Christ.'

II. Now that there was a person supereminently endued with all these characters, (a Christ in all these respects,) decreed by God in due time to come into the world for accomplishment of the greatest purposes answerable to that title, (for the instruction and reformation of the world, for the erecting and managing an universal and perpetual kingdom, for the reconciliation and benediction of mankind, for the reduction of all nations to the acknowlegement of God, and obedience to his will, and hope in his mercy,) many express passages in the ancient Scripture declare.

That such a prophet should be sent, Moses in express terms foretold: 'The Lord thy God,' saith he, 'shall raise up unto

thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken:' and, 'I will,' saith God himself, 'raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him,' &c. which words plainly describe a very extraordinary prophet some time to come, who was (signally and especially, beyond all other prophets) to resemble Moses; who consequently was to accomplish high designs, and to achieve wonderful acts; to conduct and deliver God's people, to reveal God's mind and will, to promulge a new law, and establish a new covenant; so his resembling Moses doth imply, so his mission doth signify; (for why, if he were not intended for the performance of somewhat great and new, even beyond what Moses did, should he be designed so formally; what need or reason had there been of his mission, after Moses?) and so the later prophets do interpret the great Lawgiver's words: who largely predict concerning one, ordained by God to come, who should eminently discharge all parts of the prophetical function; who should disclose new truths to men, should proclaim a new law to the world, should 'establish a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with all people;' who should propagate the knowlege and worship of God, enlightening the Gentiles, and converting them unto God; who should instruct the ignorant, strengthen the faint, comfort the afflicted; according to divers passages concerning him; as, for instance, that in Isaiah, cited by St. Luke: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted;'—and that in the same prophet alleged by St. Matthew; 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit on him; he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles, he shall not cry,' &c. which being anointed to preach tidings and to bring forth judgment from God, being elected and inspired by God in order to such performances, are peculiar marks of a prophet; such promulgation of God's will, such ministration of direction and comfort from God, are the proper employment of a prophet; that is, of an especial agent sent and qualified by God to transact spi-

ritual affairs with men, and to declare or denounce his pleasure to them.

The ancient Scriptures do also plainly signify concerning the same person, that he should be a great prince constituted by God to govern his people for ever in righteousness, peace, and prosperity; endued with power requisite for delivering them from oppression and slavery; for subduing their enemies, for reducing the nations under subjection unto God. So Isaiah: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be on his shoulders'—'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice for ever.' Jeremiah: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth: in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.' 'Ezekiel: 'I will save my flock, they shall be no more a prey'—'and I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them'—'they shall also walk in my statutes, and observe my statutes, and do them.' Daniel: 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days'—'And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages shall serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' Hosea: 'The children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.' The psalmist: 'I have set my king on my holy hill of Sion; ask of me, and I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' In these and in many other places do the prophets speak (very perspicuously and magnificently) concerning the kingdom, royal state, and princely achievements of this great personage who should come.

That he also should assume and execute the priestly function may also be learned from prophetical instruction. For of him Zechariah thus spake: 'Behold the man whose name is The Branch;' (a name, which so often (in sense) is attributed to

this person, as sprouting from the stock of David;) 'he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit, and rule on his throne; and he shall be a priest on his throne; and the counsel of the Lord shall be between them both.' Of him also David spake: 'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' To 'make reconciliation for iniquity,' (which Daniel ascribes to him;) to 'bear the sins of the people,' and to 'make intercession for the transgressors,' (which are assigned to him by Isaiah;) are also performances, from which his sacerdotal office may be collected.

These things being considered, it is no wonder that the ancient Jews (although the text of Scripture doth seldom, perhaps not oftener than once, (in the ninth of Daniel,) explicitly and directly apply this name of Christ, or Messias, to this illustrious person, so prophesied of and promised to come) did especially assign this title unto him; it seeming of any most congruous and most comprehensive of what appertained to him; most apt to denote all the prerogatives, the endowments, the achievements, the effects, which should belong to him, or proceed from him. Whence it is observed by the learned, that the Chaldee paraphrase (composed, as they say, before Jesus our Lord's time, by the priests, as an interpretation of the not so exactly understood Hebrew Scripture, for edification and instruction of the people) doth very often apply unto him this name of the Messias: according to whose exposition and style, together with tradition continually deduced down from the prophets themselves, (as is probable,) we see plainly from the New Testament, and from other history conspiring therewith, that God's people unanimously did expect a person under this name and notion, who should be endued with qualities and should perform actions conformable to the characters mentioned, to come in determinate time into the world. Of Anna the prophetess it is said, that 'she gave thanks likewise to the Lord, and spake of him πᾶσι τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν, to all that expected redemption in Jerusalem.' Hence when St. John the Baptist did live, and teach in a manner extraordinary, 'the people did expect, and all men mused in their hearts concern-

ing him, whether he were the Christ.' Yea, 'the Jews (that is, their Senate, or great Sanhedrim) sent Priests and Levites to inquire of him, whether he were the Christ or no:' and when Jesus's admirable discourses and works had convinced divers persons, they said, 'When Christ comes, shall he do greater miracles than this man hath done?' and the report which Philip made to Nathanael concerning Jesus was this; 'We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write:' so at large they did presume concerning 'a Christ to come.' That they particularly did conceive he should be a great prophet, who should abundantly declare God's truth and will, may be gathered from divers passages; as from that in St. John: 'Men therefore seeing the miracle that Jesus had done, said, That this is in truth the prophet, who was to come into the world.' Thus may that in St. Luke be taken; 'And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That the great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people:' and this the Samaritan woman implied, when she said, 'I know that the Messias comes; and when he shall come, he will tell us all things.' That they supposed he should be a king, who should be furnished with mighty power, and should perform wonderful acts; who should assume the government of God's people with royal majesty, and execute it with glorious success, is most clear. It was no wonder to King Herod to hear the wise men's inquiry, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' On it he immediately demands of the Scribes 'where Christ is to be born.' Hence no sooner did Nathanael believe in Christ, but he cries out, 'Master, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.' It was on this supposition that the priests grounded their calumny; 'We have found this man perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ, the King;' as also hence (on information and by instinct from them) Pilate asked him that question, 'Art thou the king of the Jews?' hence likewise proceeded that acclamation; Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος βασιλεὺς, 'Blessed is the King, that is to come in the name of the Lord.' And it was from this ancient popular prejudice, that the Apostles asked Jesus after his resurrection, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to

Israel?' It is indeed the ordinary title, which the Talmudists and ancient Rabbins give the Messias, 'Hammelech Messiah,' Messias the King.

That the Messias in their opinion was also to be a priest, is not so clearly apparent; yet it may probably be inferred: that they understood the 110th Psalm to respect the Messias is very likely, or rather certain, from that passage in the gospel, in which Jesus asked the Pharisees, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?' and they answering, 'The Son of David,' he returned on them this puzzling question; 'How then doth David in the spirit (that is, prophetically) call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand?' which question confounded them, they not daring to deny that Psalm to respect the Messias, (it being the received opinion among the doctors,) nor yet seeing how the relations of Son and Lord were reconcilable: and admitting that Psalm was to be referred unto the Messias, they must consequently acknowlege him to be a priest; for it is there said, 'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' It was also an opinion passing among them, that the Messias should be the Saviour of the world, as may be collected from that saying of the Samaritans; 'We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world:' which being their opinion, and toward the salvation of men it being needful that a reconciliation of them unto God, and an expiation of their sins, (which are sacerdotal acts,) should be procured by him, it seems to follow that they had some notion of his priesthood. Indeed the persuasion concerning a Messias to come, about the time when our Lord appeared, became diffused over the whole eastern parts; as even Pagan historians (Tacitus and Suetonius) do report.* And the conceit thereof was so vigorous in the Jews, that it excited them to rebellion, and encouraged them with great obstinacy to persist therein, as not only those historians, but Josephus himself telleth us;† he also together with them (which is somewhat strange) referring the intent of those prophecies, and the verifying of that opi-

* Suet. in Vesp. Tacitus Hist. v. † Jos. ἀλώσ. vi. 31.

nion, to the person of the emperor Vespasian. The same conceit did then likewise occasion many pretenders and impostors (such as Theudas, and Judas the Galilean) to arise, disposing also the people so easily to be deluded by them, and so readily to run after them, as they did to their own harm.

Thus according to the ancient Scriptures, interpreted and backed by the current tradition and general consent of God's people, it is sufficiently apparent that a Messias (according to the notion premised) was to come into the world.

III. Now farther, that Jesus, whom we acknowlege, was indeed that Messias, may appear plainly from the perfect correspondency of all circumstances belonging to the Messias's appearance, and of all characters suiting his person, and of all things to be performed by him; together with whatever was to be consequent on his presence and performances; according to ancient presignifications and predictions, and according to the passable opinions of God's people concerning him; the which, as they cannot possibly suit with any other person that hath yet appeared, or may reasonably be expected to come hereafter, so they exactly agree to the coming, and person, and practice, and success of Jesus.

Among circumstances the most considerable is the time; the which (both when it was said that he should come, and when it was fit that he should come) did very well agree to Jesus. 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,' &c. Fulness in regard to ancient prediction, in regard to fitness of season. For as the Messias was to be 'the desire of all nations,' so Jesus did come then, when by special instinct a general expectation and desire of his coming was raised in the world; at the time when the Patriach Jacob foretold that 'Shiloh would come,' viz. 'when the sceptre was just departed from Judah, and a Lawgiver from his feet;' Judea being brought under the dominion of strangers; (such were the Romans, such was King Herod.) About the expiration of Daniel's weeks, (however commenced or computed,) 'the time determined to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to introduce everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to

anoint the most Holy,' (as the prophet speaks.) Shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, according to that of Daniel; 'And after sixty and two weeks shall Messias be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.' When that Zion, 'out of which,' as Isaiah tells us, 'the law was to go forth; and out of which the Redeemer should come, and turn ungodliness from Jacob,' did stand and florish. When the temple did stand, which the prophets Malachi and Haggai did predict should be illustrated by the presence of the Messiah: 'The Lord, whom ye seek,' saith Malachi, 'shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, in whom ye delight:' and, 'I will,' saith Haggai, 'shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord: the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.' Before Jewry was desolated, Jerusalem destroyed, the tribes and families of Israel confounded, all that people wofully dispersed, and in a palpable manner deserted by God. When the Jewish religion (which the Messias was to complete) was by a numerous accession of proselytes disseminated and diffused through many provinces of that one vast empire, under which a great part of the world was united and settled durably in a calm state of peace and order: when one or two languages were commonly understood by all, and men thereby more easily conversed together; and when the ancient Scriptures being translated into Greek were so widely intelligible. When mankind was become generally civilised and cultivated with laws, and policy, and learning; with knowlege of arts and philosophy; the world then beginning of itself to open its eyes, so as to discern the errors and deceits by which it long had been abused; and was thence well prepared to learn, and rendered very susceptive of divine truth; when all things thus conspired with good advantage to entertain the Christ, then 'in the fulness of time,' in the right and proper season, (καιροῖς ἰδίοις, as St. Paul speaketh) καιρῷ δεκτῷ, 'in an acceptable time,' as Isaiah prophesied, did Jesus come, to instruct and reform the world, as he professed. It was Porphyry's objec-

tion against Christianity, and an obvious one, why Christ did not come before, but in the latter days; to which the particular fitness of this time is an answer.

The other circumstances; the family out of which, the place where, the manner in which, Jesus was born, did also punctually correspond. He was to be an Israelite, according to the promise made of old to Abraham, that 'in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed;' and according to Moses's prophecy; 'The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren.' He was to come out of the tribe of Judah; as the patriarch Jacob in his last prophetical rapture did by various expressions intimate and signify. Particularly he was to rise out of the family of David, as the prophets frequently and clearly did avouch; for he was, as Isaiah said, 'to be a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch going out of his roots;' 'a righteous Branch,' according to Jeremiah, 'whom God would raise to David.' He whom Solomon (that most wise, peaceable, and prosperous prince, who raised that glorious temple, the emblem of God's Church) did presignify; and in whom the promises made to David concerning the perpetuity of his throne should be made good; 'There shall not fail thee a man,' &c. 'Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee;' 'thy throne shall be established for ever;' especially that absolute and irrevocable promise ratified by God's oath; 'I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne unto all generations:' who consequently by reason of conjunction in blood, and mutual representation, David prefiguring him, and he by succession into the imperial right expressing David, is by several of the prophets (by Jeremiah, by Ezekiel, by Hosea) called David: whence the learned among the Jews did consent that the Messias was to be the Son of David; 'How say the Scribes, that Christ is the Son of David?' and, 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? (it is our Lord's question to the Pharisees;) They say unto him, The Son of David.' Yea the people were generally informed herein, and possessed with this sentiment; 'Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David?' was a po-

pular speech in St. John. 'And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?' Now accordingly that Jesus came out of this country, tribe, and family, (that he was, as St. Luke speaketh, 'of the house and lineage of David,' both according to natural and legal succession,) the express affirmation of angels, the positive attestation of his parents and kindred, (who best knew,) the genealogies (according to the manner of those times and that nation) carefully preserved and produced by the Evangelists, do assure us; neither doth it appear that Jesus's adversaries did ever contest this point, but seem by their silence to have granted it, as easily and evidently provable by authentic records and testimonies.

More precisely yet for the place of the Messias's birth, it was to be the town of Bethlehem; so the Prophet Micah foretold; thus cited by St. Matthew: 'Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.' So from thence did the learned judge; for being consulted by king Herod 'where Christ was to be born,' they answered, 'that in Bethlehem:' and so also did the people commonly believe, as appears by the aforesaid passage in St. John; 'Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?' Now that Jesus should be there born, God himself took especial care, ordering it by his providence, that by imperial edict the world should be taxed, or registered; and that in order thereto the parents of Jesus should be forced to go from a distant place of their habitation unto Bethlehem, the place of their stock and family; that so both Jesus might be born there, and that good circumstance might appear certain by the unquestionable testimony of the censual tables, unto which (extant even in their times) Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and St. Chrysostom refer those, who would be certified in that particular.*

That place also of his parents' abode in Nazareth of Galilee, on which was consequent his first appearance in way of action, was so ordered as to answer ancient predictions; according to

* Just. Martyr. Apol. 2. Tertull. in Marc. iv. 19.

which it was said, that 'in the land of Zabulon and Nephthali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations, the people that walked in darkness did see a great light, and they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light shined.'

The manner also of the Messias's birth was, as became such a Person, to be very extraordinary, and different from the common generation of men: for he was not only to be 'one like the Son of man,' as the Prophet Daniel terms him, and indeed 'the Son of David,' as all the prophecies declare of him, but 'the Son of God' also; for, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee,' saith God of him in the second Psalm. And that which in the less perfect sense was said of Solomon, (who prefigured him,) was, according to a more sublime meaning, and more exactly to agree unto him: 'He shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever:' 'Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth:' and accordingly we see that the Jews (both the wise and the vulgar sort) did suppose that he should be 'the Son of God;' so St. John the Baptist, so Nathanael, so Martha, so St. Peter, and the other Apostles, when they became persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, did presently, according to anticipation of judgment common to them with the people, confess him to be 'the Son of God;' the high-priest himself intimated the same, when he asked Jesus, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Yea, the devils themselves were learned and orthodox in this point; who cried out, 'Thou art the Christ; the Son of God.' Now that, according to those prophecies and those traditions, the Messias should be in a more than ordinary way, and (for the justifying of God's truth together with the satisfying men) should evidently appear to be the Son of God, it was requisite (at least convenient) that his birth should be procured by divine operation, without concurrence of a human father; (how otherwise, at least how better, could it be apparent that he was both the Son of God and of man?) It was consequently either necessary or fit that he should be born of a virgin: and that he should indeed be so born, the Prophet Isaiah did signify, when he said, 'The Lord himself shall give you a sign,'

(that is, shall perform somewhat very remarkable and strange: what was that?) 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;' which prophecy that it belonged to the Messias appears from the report and description which follows in the continuation of this particular prophecy concerning this child: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful,' &c. which description questionless appertaineth to the Messias. The same prophet signifies the same concerning him, when he introduceth him speaking thus; 'And now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be his servant,' &c. Now that Jesus in correspondence to this admirable character was born of a virgin, his parents (persons of unblamable integrity and innocence; so that even the adversaries of Jesus appear not ever to have offered to impeach them of imposture, or to have troubled them about this report coming from them) did constantly aver, angels did attest to their report, and God himself at several times by audible voices from heaven declared Jesus to be 'his beloved Son.'

The state and condition also, in which the Messias was first to appear, was described to be a state of external meanness and obscurity, of poverty and wretchedness, in the eye of man: a state indeed most convenient and proper for a spiritual king, a most holy priest, an absolute prophet; who was to teach, exercise, and exemplify the most rough and harsh pieces of righteousness and piety, (contempt of worldly vanities and pleasures; all sorts of self-denial and abstinence; the virtues of meekness, humility, and patience;) who was to manage and execute his great undertakings, not by natural or human force, but by a virtue supernatural and divine; whose power consequently would be more conspicuous in a state of visible meanness and impotency, than in a condition of worldly splendor and strength; that also which he was to merit from God, and to undergo for the sake of men, doth argue the same: that such the Messias's state was to be, there are divers mystical intimations in the ancient Scripture; but the Prophet Isaiah speaks it out most plainly: 'He shall grow up (says he describing that state) before the Lord like a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry

ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.' And again: 'Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy one; To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship.'

Now that Jesus appeared thus in a poor, servile, and despicable condition, we need not for to prove; for as his followers avow it, so his adversaries are most ready to grant it; in the haughtiness of their conceit taking it for an advantage against him, it proves a scandal to them. 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? said they; and they were offended at him.' Hence was it that, as the prophet foretold, 'He was despised and rejected of men, and they esteemed him not.' Thus all the circumstances of the Messias's coming were answered by those of Jesus.

Now concerning the qualities and endowments of the Messias, which constitute his personal character, they are, as was expedient, such as should dispose and fit him for the discharge of his great employment and duty with utmost advantage, and especial decency: in general, he was to be endued with supereminent piety and sanctity, with perfect innocence and integrity; so it is implied in all the descriptions of his person and performances: 'The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre: thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity; wherefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,' said the psalmist of him; and, 'Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins,' said Isaiah of him, (denoting the ready disposition of his mind to do whatever was good:) and, 'He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his lips,' saith the same prophet of him again. Some particular virtues and abilities are also ascribed to him in an eminent degree: excellent wisdom and knowlege in spiritual matters, thus represented by Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowlege and fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.' Eloquence also, skill and aptitude to instruct men; which that most evan-

gelical prophet thus sets forth: 'The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' That he should be meek, and gentle, and compassionate toward men, in regard to their infirmities and afflictions; mild and lowly in his conversation, the prophets also signify: 'He shall,' saith Isaiah, 'feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young:' 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench:' and, 'Behold,' saith Zechariah, 'thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding on an ass.' That he should be of a quiet and peaceable disposition, nowise fierce or contentious, turbulent or clamorous, Isaiah declares, thus saying of him, (as St. Matthew cites him;) 'He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.' To his admirable patience in bearing afflictions and contumelies, Isaiah thus renders express testimony: 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' And, 'I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' His invincible courage and resolution in God's service, together with his strong confidence in God and intire submission to God's will, is thus described by the same prophet: 'The Lord God,' saith he, 'will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.'—'The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.' His general goodness and boundless charity toward men, the nature of his office and design, together with the whole course and tenor of his practice, such as they are represented, do suppose and imply.

Now that Jesus (our Lord) did in his person fully correspond, and did by his practice thoroughly make good this moral high character; the story of his life with admirable simplicity and sincerity, without any semblance of disguise or artifice, represented by persons who most intimately were acquainted and long conversed with him, (or by persons immediately informed

by them,) and with greatest constancy attested to and maintained by them, doth plainly show; wherein his incomparable piety toward God, his readiness to fulfil all righteousness, his intire submission and resignation of himself to God's will, the continual fervency, (devotion of all kinds, prayer, thanksgiving, fasting, practised in the most intense degree and in the most reverent manner,) his pure and ardent zeal for God's glory, his steadfast resolution, and indefatigable industry in God's service (making it his meat to do the will of him that sent him, and to perform his work.)

Wherein an unspotted innocence, not only exempted from the vices and defilements, but raised above the vanities and impertinences of the world; secured by a magnanimous contempt, or neglect and abstinence from all worldly grandeur and splendor; all secular wealth and profit, all bodily delight and ease, wherein an admirable wisdom and prudence, expressed in all his demeanor and his discourse; in his discerning the secret thoughts and dissembled intentions of men; in his declaring and defending truth, detecting and confuting errors; in baffling learned and wily opposers; in eluding captious questions, and evading treacherous designs; in not meddling with the secular affairs and interests of men; in not incumbering himself with the needless cares and occupations of this life, nor intangling himself in the snares of this world; in dexterously accommodating his behavior and his speech to the dispositions, the capacities, the needs of men; to the circumstances of things and exigences of occasion, so as did best conduce to the promoting his great design and undertaking; so that the people observing his proceedings, could not but be astonished, and ask, 'Whence hath this man this wisdom?' so that they could not but acknowlege, 'He hath done all things well.'

Wherein particularly an excellent faculty of speaking and teaching, of interpreting and applying the holy Scriptures, of proving and persuading God's truth, whereby he drew the people after him, converted many of them to amendment of life, convinced the most averse and incredulous; so that 'all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and answers;' so that 'all bare witness, and wondered at the gra-

cious words which proceeded out of his mouth;' so that the officers sent to apprehend him did confess, 'Never man spake like this man.'

Wherein an invincible fortitude and gallantry, expressed in his most constant profession and undaunted maintenance of truth and goodness; in his encountering the prejudices, detecting the frauds, reproving the vices of the age, though upheld by the greatest persons and by prevalent factions; in his plain dealing and free speaking with all sincerity and all authority, in his zealous checking and chastising profane abuses; in his disregarding the rash and fond opinions of men, their spiteful obloquies, harsh censures, slanderous imputations, and unjust reproaches; in his foreseeing the greatest of dangers and worst of mischiefs that could arrive to man, yet cheerfully encountering and firmly sustaining them; sustaining all the violent oppositions and assaults which the most virulent malice and envy inflamed with superstition and blind zeal could set against him.

Wherein a most quiet and peaceable disposition, apparent from his never attempting any resistance, or any revenge on provocation of frequent great affronts and injuries; from his never raising any tumults, nor fomenting any quarrels, nor meddling with any litigious matters, nor encroaching on any man's right or office; by his ready compliance with received customs, by his paying tribute, although not due from him, to prevent offence; by his frequent instructions and exhortations to peace, to innocence, to patience, to due obedience, to performing due respect to superiors, and paying customs to governors; to the yielding a docile ear, and an observance to those who 'sat in Moses's chair.'

Wherein an exceeding meekness and gentleness, demonstrated in all his conversation; in resenting very moderately, or rather not resenting at all, most unjust hatreds, outrageous calumnies, bitter reproaches and contumelies from his adversaries; very perverse neglects and ingratitudes from multitudes of people; many infirmities, stupidities, distrusts, baseneses and treacheries from his own nearest friends and followers. In his passing over and easily pardoning the greatest offences

committed against him; yea sometime extenuating and excusing them. In the mildness of his censures, expostulations, and reproofs; in his tempering the fierce zeal, hard censure, and rigorous proceeding against persons unhappy, or faulty; in his tender pity of all persons in any want, distress, or trouble; in his earnest commiseration and bewailing the vengeance he foresaw impendent on his persecutors, and in his praying for their pardon.

Wherein a marvellous humility and lowliness of mind expressed by his not seeking honor or applause from men, but shunning and rejecting it; his not assuming to himself, but ascribing all to God, and referring all to his glory, by his making no ostentation of his miraculous power and high endowments, but, so far as would comport with the prosecution of his main purpose, (the glory and service of God, the good and welfare of men,) carefully suppressing and concealing them; in his without dissatisfaction or discouragement bearing scorn, and contempt, and obloquy; in his willing condescension to the meanest offices and employments; in his free and familiar conversation with all sorts of people, with the lowest and most despicable, with the worst and most odious, for their good; he not despising the poorest or vilest wretch, who seemed capable of receiving any benefit from him; in his easiness to be intreated, and readiness to comply with the desires of any man imploring succor or relief from him; in his being ready, not only to oblige, but to be obliged and receive courtesies from any man; to answer the invitation of a pharisee or of a publican; to accept favorably the well-intended respect of a poor woman; in the softness and sweetness of his language to all men, particularly to his disciples; 'Be of good courage, daughter;' 'Son, be of good cheer;' 'I say unto you, my friends;' 'Little children, I am a little while with you.' Such was his style and conversation toward his inferiors.

Wherein an unparalleled patience is contentedly and cheerfully, through all the course of his life, undertaking and undergoing whatever by God's will and providence was imposed on him, how grievous and distasteful soever to human apprehension or sense; the extremest penury, the hardest toil, the vilest disgraces, the most bitter pains and anguishes incident to body

or mind, the most horrid and most sorrowful of deaths, all these aggravated by the conscience of his own clearest innocence, by the extreme ingratitude of those who misused him, by the sense of God's displeasure for the sin of man, by all the embittering considerations which a most lively piety and tender charity suggested; in submitting to all this most freely and most calmly without any regret, any disturbance.

Wherein an unexpressible and unconceivable charity, ('a charity indeed which surpasseth knowlege,' as St. Paul speaketh,) evidenced in the constant strain and tenor of his whole life, passing through all his designs, all his words, and all his actions; for διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν, as St. Peter says in the Acts, he did nothing else, but 'go about doing good,' and benefiting men; curing their diseases, relieving their wants, instructing their minds, reforming their manners, drawing them to God and goodness, disposing them to the attainment of everlasting bliss and salvation. It is love, we may observe, which was the soul that animated and actuated him in all things; which carried him with unwearied resolution and alacrity through all the cruel hardships and toils, through all the dismal crosses and ignominies he endured: his life was in effect but one continual expression of charity, (differently exerting itself according to various opportunities, and circumstances, and needs of men,) the which was consummated, and sealed by his death; the highest instance of charity that could be; for, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.'

Wherein, finally, (in which life, I say, of Jesus,) all holiness, all virtue, all goodness (suitable to him, who was to be not only the teacher and the persuader of the best life, but a living standard and pattern thereof; who was to merit of God in man's behalf, to conciliate God's favor towards us, and appease his anger against us) do shine and sparkle with a beauty and a lustre transcending all expression. All which particulars might, were it now proper and seasonable, be thoroughly declared by instances extant in the evangelical history. So that the characteristical qualities of the Messias do clearly and abundantly agree to Jesus our Lord.

His performances should next be considered and compared;

but the time doth not admit that we should now proceed any farther.

Now, 'blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XVIII.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

THE five particulars proposed for explanation repeated. The first and second of these having been dispatched, we entered into the third, which is of the highest consequence, beginning to declare that Jesus, our Lord, is *the Christ*, from the circumstances of his advent, and from his personal qualifications: we now proceed to declare the same from the exact correspondence of his undertakings, &c. to those which were predicted of the Messias; together with the consequences of what the Messias was to do, and what Jesus did answerably effect.

1. One great performance of the Messias was, by inspiration and in the name of God, to make a complete discovery of divine truth; to publish a law of perpetual obligation; to institute a religion perfect in all respects, &c. The doctrine which Jesus taught is shown to have done this in the completest manner, with regard to the character of God himself; concerning our own nature, origin, and end, &c.; also with regard to the most accurate rule of life, suitable to our nature and our welfare: it is also shown that no religion can be purer from superstitious alloys and useless incumbrances; none can have the like advantage of setting before us a living copy and visible standard of good practice; none can build our duty on more solid grounds, and direct it to better ends; no doctrine can afford more and greater encouragements to the practice of it; none can, in a more sure or kindly manner, appease and satisfy the conscience. Such is the doctrine, law, and religion of

Jesus; so that hence we may reasonably infer that the doctrine taught, the law promulgated, the religion instituted by him in God's name, are the very same which the predictions concerning the Messias refer unto, as the last which should come from God.

2. But of his doctrine particularly, it was signified that it should be very comfortable, joyful, and acceptable to mankind: this enlarged on, and illustrated from Scripture.

Now to all this the preaching of Jesus did exactly correspond; it being, as it was named, a gospel, or message of good and joy: this explained.

3. Collateral unto, or coincident with those performances, namely, the teaching such a doctrine, publishing such a law, &c., was the formal institution of a new, everlasting covenant, dissolving all other; a covenant between God and man; a covenant of grace and mercy, and salvation, &c.: this covenant described at large.

Now that Jesus did institute such a covenant, wherein all the benefits promised on God's part, and all the duties required on ours, do punctually correspond to the terms of that predesigned by the prophets, is apparent from the whole tenor of the Christian gospel: this shown.

4. In coincidence also with these performances, it is declared that the Messias should erect a kingdom, spiritual in nature, universal in extent, and perpetual in duration; by the power and virtue of which the enemies of God's people should be curbed and quelled; the subjects of it should live together in peace, and safety, and prosperity.

The chief testimonies of ancient Scripture predicting this kingdom have been already mentioned: at this time therefore, the nature and extent of it only are treated of, for the illustration and proof of our main purpose.

5. If we singly compare the particular consequences and successes of the Messias's performances, expressed by the pro-

phets, we shall find an exact correspondence in what hath followed our Lord's undertakings.

This shown, with regard to the great opposition that should be made against his doctrine by Jews and Gentiles; with regard to his person, which should be acknowleged, worshipped, and blessed over all the world; with regard to a diffusion of the knowlege of God over all nations; also to that righteousness which in the times of the Messias should commonly prosper; to the peace, love, charity, and justice which should ensue on the entertainment of the Messias's doctrine and laws; to the great princes and potentates which should submit to him, avowing his authority and reverencing his name, &c.; also with regard to a particular consequence of what the Messias should do, that, by virtue of his performances, idolatry, or the worship of wicked spirits, should be conspicuously vanquished and destroyed; also with regard to the state of things consequent on all these performances, a state so different from the former state of mankind, that it is called the creation of a new world.

Other important considerations of this kind still remain: these reserved to a future occasion. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XVIII.

THAT JESUS IS THE TRUE MESSIAS.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews, which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.

In conformity to St. Paul's design and practice implied here, I have formerly propounded to explain and persuade these particulars. 1. What is the right notion and reason of this name or title, Christ. 2. That there was destinated to come into the world a Person, who signally, according to that right notion, should be the Christ. 3. That Jesus, whom we avow, is that Person, the very Christ. 4. In what manner, and on what accounts, the New Testament representeth Jesus to be the Christ. 5. What application the point requireth.

In prosecution of which particulars, having dispatched the first and second, I did enter into the third, which is of highest consequence, beginning to declare that Jesus, our Lord, is the Christ, from the circumstances of his coming into the world, and from his personal qualifications; which having in some measure performed, I shall now proceed to declare the same from the exact correspondency of his undertakings and performances to those, which, according to ancient presignifications and prophecies, the Messias was designed to un-

dertake and accomplish; together with the consequences of what the Messias was to do, and what answerably Jesus did effect.

1. One great performance of the Messias was, by inspiration and in the name of God, to make a complete discovery of divine truth; to publish a law of universal and perpetual obligation; to institute a religion consummate in all respects, which should correct the faults and supply the defects of all precedent dispensations, which should therefore be, as it were, God's last will and testament, after which no other revelation was to be expected: 'I will,' said Moses of him, 'put words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I command him; and it shall come to pass, that whoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him:' by him Isaiah foretold that 'God shall teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of God from Jerusalem: by him Jeremiah signified, that 'God would put his law into the inward parts of men, and write it in their hearts;' it was, as it is said in Daniel, part of his work 'to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy;' and his days in the prophets are commonly styled 'the last days,' because, it seemeth, of the perfection of his doctrine, and immutability of his law; where such an intire instruction and final resolution in all points was commonly expected by the Jews, as the Samaritan woman did intimate; 'I know,' said she, according to the current persuasion then, 'that the Messias cometh; and when he shall come, he will tell us all things.'

Now accordingly Jesus (our hope, and author of our faith) hath taught a doctrine, hath proclaimed a law, hath instituted a religion, which on strict and careful examination will be found most perfect in all respects; such in its nature as cannot but indispensably oblige all that understand it; such as is worthy of God, and suitable to his designs of glorifying himself, and obliging his creature; in short, he hath been author of such an institution, as may be demonstrated the most excellent and complete that can be. For (briefly to show this by considering the main, if not all imaginable excellences of any

religion, law, or doctrine) it is impossible that any doctrine should assign a more true, proper, complete notion or character of God himself, more congruous to what reason dictateth, the works of nature declare, the purest tradition attesteth, or common experience doth intimate concerning God; more apt to breed in our hearts the highest affection and reverence toward him, or to engage us in the strictest practice of duty and obedience to him; none can ascribe unto God higher perfections of nature, can more assert unto him all his due rights and prerogatives, can better commend and justify to us all his actions and proceedings, can represent him more amiable in his goodness, more terrible in his justice, more glorious and venerable in all his ways of providence; can consequently better direct or dispose us to render unto him a worship worthy of him and acceptable to him; can also therefore with more security and advantage commend unto us the imitation of him in our disposition and demeanor.

Nor could any doctrine more clearly and fully inform us concerning ourselves; concerning our nature, our original, our end, all our state, past, present, final; what the dignity of our nature is, for what purposes we were designed and framed, wherein our happiness doth consist, what shall be our state after death, how we shall be judged and dealt with then; the knowlege of which particulars is of so immense consequence, for the satisfaction of our minds and direction of our lives; concerning which therefore men in all times have so earnestly inquired and disputed, without any sure resolution but from hence.

Nor could a more accurate rule of life (more congruous to reason and suitable to our nature, or perfective thereof; more conducible to our welfare and our content; more apt to procure each man's private good, and to promote the public benefit of all) have been prescribed; nothing can be more just, or comely, or pleasant, or beneficial to us, than are the duties of piety (consisting in love, reverence, gratitude, devotion, obedience, faith and repentance toward God) which Christianism doth require. No directions concerning our deportment toward our neighbors and brethren can be imagined comparable to those (those of hearty love, good-will, beneficence,

compassion, readiness to forgive, meekness, peaceableness, and the like) which the Christian law injoineth. No precepts or advices concerning the management of ourselves (the ordering our souls and our bodies in their respective functions and fruitions) can be devised more agreeable to sound reason, more productive of true welfare and real delight unto us, than are those of being humble and modest in our conceits, calm and composed in our passions, sober and temperate in our enjoyments, patient and contented in our state, with the like, which the Christian doctrine doth inculcate. No other method can raise us up so near to heaven and happiness as that which we here learn of abstracting and elevating our minds above the fading glories, the unstable possessions, the vanishing delights of this world; the fixing our thoughts, affections, and hopes on the concernments of a better future state.

No religion also can be purer from superstitious alloys, or freer from useless incumbrances (or from, as Tertullian* calleth them, 'busy scrupulosities') than is this, (such as it is in its native simplicity, and as it came from its author, before the pragmatical curiosity, or domineering humor, or covetous designings of men had tampered with it,) it only requiring a rational and spiritual service, consisting in performance of substantial duties plainly necessary or profitable; the ritual observances it injoineth being, as very few in number, in nature simple and easy to observe, so evidently reasonable, very decent and very useful, able to instruct us in, apt to excite us to, the practice of most wholesome duties.

No religion also can have the like advantage of setting before us a living copy and visible standard of good practice, affording so compendious an instruction, and so efficacious an incitement to all piety and virtue: so absolutely perfect, so purposely designed, so fitly accommodated for our imitation, and withal so strongly engaging us thereto, as the example of Jesus our Lord, such as it is in the gospels represented to us.

Neither can any religion build our duty on more solid grounds, or draw it from better principles, or drive it to better ends, or press it with more valid inducements than ours; which

* Tert. in Marc. lib. ii.

builds it on conformity to the perfect nature of God, and to the dictates of his infallible wisdom, on the holy will and most just authority of our natural Lord and Maker; which draweth it from love, reverence, and gratitude to God, from a hearty goodwill to men, and from a sober regard to our own true welfare; which propoundeth God's honor, our neighbor's edification, and our own salvation, as the principal ends of action; which stirreth up good practice by minding us that we shall thereby resemble God, express our thankfulness, and discharge our duty to him, obtain his mercy and favor, acquire present comfort of mind and future bliss, avoid regrets of conscience here, and endless torments hereafter.

Neither can any doctrine afford more encouragements to the endeavors of practising it than doth this, which tendereth sufficient help and ability toward the performance of whatever it enjoineth; offering (on our seeking them or asking for them) God's infallible wisdom to direct us in our darknesses and doubts, God's almighty strength to assist us in our temptations and combats, God's loving spirit to comfort us in our afflictions and distresses.

Nor can any doctrine in a more sure or kindly manner appease and satisfy a man's conscience, so as to produce therein a well-grounded hope and solid comfort; to heal the wounds of bitter remorse and anxious fear, which the sense of guilt doth inflict, than doth this, which assureth us that God Almighty, notwithstanding all our offences committed against him, is not only reconcilable to us, but desirous to become our friend; that he doth on our repentance, and compliance with his gentle terms, receive us unto perfect grace and favor, discharging all our guilts and debts, however contracted; that our endeavors to serve and please God, although imperfect and defective, if serious and sincere, shall be accepted and rewarded by him.

Such is the doctrine, law, and religion of Jesus; expressed in a most unaffected and perspicuous way, with all the gravity and simplicity of speech, with all the majesty and authority of proposal becoming divine truth; so excellent, and so complete in all respects, that it is beyond the imagination of man to conceive any thing better, yea, I dare say, repugnant to the nature

of things that there should be any other way of religion (different substantially from it) so very good. God himself, we may presume to say, cannot infuse truer notions concerning himself or concerning us, cannot reveal more noble or more useful truths; cannot prescribe better laws or rules, cannot afford more proper means and aids, cannot propound more equal and reasonable terms, cannot offer higher encouragements and rewards, cannot discover his mind in a more excellent way than he hath done by Jesus, for his own glory and service, for our benefit and happiness: so that hence we may reasonably infer that the doctrine taught, the law promulgated, the religion instituted by Jesus in God's name, are the very same which the predictions concerning the Messias do refer unto, as the last which should ever come from God, most full and perfect, universally and perpetually obliging.

2. Thus in general the prophets spake concerning the Messias's doctrine, and so that of Jesus correspondeth thereto: but of that doctrine particularly it was signified that it should be very comfortable, joyful, and acceptable to mankind; as containing a declaration (peculiar thereto) of God's kind and gracious intentions toward us, overtures of especial mercy and love, dispensations of all sorts of spiritual blessings; the pardon and abolition of sins committed, peace and satisfaction of conscience, deliverance from spiritual slaveries and captivities; 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee:' so Zechariah speaketh of his coming, and implieth the joyful purport of his message: and, 'How beautiful,' saith Isaiah, 'on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!' and, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance,' or of recompense, as the LXX. render it, 'of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the gar-

ment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' It is a part of what God in Jeremiah promised to dispense by him; 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' It is one of the Messias's performances, 'to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity;' to 'sprinkle clean water' on God's people, and 'to save them from their uncleannesses.' In fine, the prophet Zechariah saith of his time, that 'in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.'

Now to all this the preaching of Jesus did exactly correspond; it being indeed, as it was named, a gospel, or message of good and joy; declaring the special good-will of God, and his merciful willingness to be reconciled to mankind; offering peace and pardon to all that are sensible of their guilt, and penitent for their sin; imparting rest, comfort, and liberty to all that are weary and afflicted with spiritual burdens, grievances, and slaveries; taking off all grievous yokes of superstition, servility, and sin; and in their stead imposing a no less sweet and pleasant, than just and reasonable obedience; ministering all sorts of blessings needful for our succor, relief, ease, content, and welfare; wholly breathing sweetest love, (all kinds of love; love between God and man, between man and man, between man and his own conscience;) filling the hearts of those who sincerely embrace and comply with it, with present joy, and raising in them gladsome hopes of future bliss. It was indeed the most joyous sound that ever entered into man's ears, the most welcome news that ever was reported on earth; news of a certain and perfect salvation from all the enemies of our welfare, from all the causes of mischief and misery to us; well therefore deserving that auspicious gratulation from the angel—'Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'

3. Collateral unto, or coincident with, those performances, (the teaching such a doctrine, publishing such a law, dispensing such blessings,) was the formal institution and establishment of a new, everlasting covenant, (different from all precedent covenants, and swallowing them up in its perfection,) a covenant between God and man, wherein God, entering into a most

strict alliance and relation with us, should be pleased to dispense the blessings of spiritual illumination and assistance, of mercy and favor, of salvation and felicity; wherein we in way of condition, according to obligations of justice and gratitude, should engage to return unto God by hearty repentance, and to persist in faithful obedience to him: of such a covenant the Messias was to be the messenger and mediator, or the angel thereof, (as the prophet Malachi speaketh, alluding, it seems, to that angel of God's presence, who ordained the Jewish law, and conducted the Israelites toward the promised land;) of which covenant and its mediator, God in Isaiah thus spake: 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and I will hold thine hand, and I will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house:' and of the same he again; 'Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David—Behold, I have given him a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people:' so in general he speaketh thereof, and inviteth thereto: then a special part thereof he expresseth thus; 'Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.' Of the same covenant God in Ezekiel speaketh thus; 'I will set up one shepherd over them'—'and I will make with them a covenant of peace, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them'—'and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore'—'they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.' Of the same, God thus declareth in Jeremiah, most fully and plainly reckoning the particular blessings tendered therein: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law into their

inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more:' which words signify the tenor of that covenant on God's part to import that God would impart a full and clear discovery of his will unto them, whom it should concern; that he would afford to them all requisite means and helps, qualifying them for the performance of their duty; that he would bestow on them (complying with the terms of this covenant, and performing their duty) an intire remission of all their sins, with an assurance of his constant and perpetual favor.

Now that Jesus did institute such a covenant, wherein all the benefits promised on God's part, and all the duties required on our parts, do punctually correspond to the terms of that predesigned by the prophets, is apparent by the whole tenor of the Christian gospel; wherein a full declaration of God's will is held forth, so that no man (except out of wilfulness or negligence) can be ignorant thereof; wherein, on condition of faith and repentance, God's mercy and pardon are exhibited and offered to all; wherein the communication of God's holy Spirit of grace (for directing and assisting the embraces of this covenant in the practice of their duty) is promised and dispensed; wherein on our part faith in God (or heartily returning to him) and faithful observance of God's laws are required; wherein God declareth a most favorable regard and love (together with very near and endearing relations) to those who undertake and conform to his terms; of which new covenant Jesus is represented the Angel, the Mediator, the Sponsor; having by his preaching declared it, by his merits and intercessions purchased and procured it, by his blood ratified and assured it to us.

4. In coincidence also with those performances, it is declared that the Messias should erect a kingdom spiritual in nature, universal in extent, and perpetual in duration; by the power and virtue whereof the enemies of God's people should be curbed and quelled; the subjects of which should live together in amity and peace, in safety and prosperity; wherein truth

and righteousness should gloriously flourish. The chief testimonies of ancient Scripture predicting this kingdom I had occasion before to mention, and shall not repeat them now; only concerning the nature and extent thereof I shall add somewhat, serving for illustration and proof of our main purpose.

That it was to be a spiritual kingdom (not a visible dominion over the bodies and estates of men, managed by external force and co-action, but a government of men's hearts and consciences by secret inspirations, and moral instructions or persuasions) may be several ways collected and argued: it appeareth from the temper and disposition of its Founder, who was to be 'a Prince of Peace;' of a peaceable, meek, patient, and humble disposition: it may be inferred from his condition, which was not to be a state of external grandeur and magnificence, but of poverty and affliction; for he was to be as he is described, mean and despicable in appearance; having 'no form or comeliness, no beauty, that when we should see him, we should desire him;' being 'a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief:' it also followeth from the events happening to him, which were not to conquer and triumph openly in view of carnal eyes; but to be despised and rejected, to be afflicted, oppressed, and slaughtered by men; the same we may learn from the manner of its establishment and propagation; which was not to be effected by force and violence, but by virtue of a quiet and gentle instruction; by reasonable words, not by hard blows: so doth the prophet signify, when he saith of the Messias, that, 'with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked:' not by force of hands, or terror of arms, not in furious and bloody combats, but by the spiritual 'rod of his mouth,' with the soft breath of his lips he was to slay the wicked, converting them unto righteousness: so doth Daniel also imply when he saith, that 'a stone cut out of the mountains without hands should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms.' Yea the nature thereof itself doth argue the same; for the laws enjoined and duties required, the blessings ministered and rewards propounded therein are purely spiritual, not relating to a temporal state, yea hardly consisting

with secular domination; as may appear by attending to its fundamental constitution, or to the covenant settled between the Prince and subjects thereof; wherein the divine spirit and grace, light and knowlege, mercy and pardon for sins, comfort of mind, and peace of conscience, God's especial love and favor, things merely spiritual, are expressly promised; but worldly power, wealth, and prosperity are pretermitted; and thence may justly be presumed no ingredients, or appurtenances thereof. Indeed the constitution of a temporal or worldly kingdom, with visible pomp and lustre, such as the Jews (a grossly conceited and sensually affected people) did, mistaking the prophets, desire and expect, had been a thing, as very agreeable to the carnal or childish opinions of men, so in reasonable esteem of no considerable value, benefit, or use to mankind: such a domination could only have concerned the mortal part and temporal state of man; it could only have procured some trivial conveniences for our bodies, or gratifications to our sense: the settlement also, and preservation of such a kingdom (according to that vast extent and long duration which the prophets imply) seemeth, without quite altering the whole frame of human nature, scarce possible; and reasons there are obvious enough, why it would not be expedient or beneficial for men: but the founding and upholding a spiritual kingdom (such as we described) is evidently of inestimable benefit to the nobler and more divine part of men; may serve to promote the eternal welfare of our souls; may easily, without changing the natural appetites of men, or disturbing the world, be carried on any where, and subsist for ever by the occult influences of divine grace; it consequently is most worthy of God to design and accomplish. Such a kingdom therefore was meant by the prophets, being indeed no other than a church, or society of persons, with unanimous consent heartily acknowleging the one true God of Israel, Maker of heaven and earth, for their Sovereign Prince and Lawgiver; submitting themselves in all their actions to his laws and commands, expecting protection and recompense of their obedience from him.

As for the general extent of this kingdom, and the Messias's proceedings in settling and propagating it, that is also very perspicuously and copiously represented in the ancient prophets,

who declare that by him mankind (then immersed in deep ignorance and error, in wretched impiety and wickedness, in utter estrangement and aversion from God and goodness) should be reduced to the knowlege, worship, and obedience of God; that they should be received into God's protection, and should partake of his special favor; that all nations of men should by the Messias be enlightened with saving knowlege, and converted to the practice of true righteousness; that all men every where (all that would regard and observe his word, all in God's design and desire, in effect a numerous company of men) should by his means be aggregated to God's church, and rendered God's people; enjoying the benefits and privileges suitable to that state or relation: in expressing these things the ancient Scriptures are very pregnant and copious: Moses, in that most divine song (endited by God himself, and uttered in his name) which seemeth to contain the history and the continual fate of the Jewish people, doth foretell this, and concludeth his song therewith; as with the last matter, which should happen during God's special relation to that people, importing the period of Judaism, or of the Israelitish theocracy. 'Rejoice,' saith he, 'O ye nations, with his people.' God in the second Psalm thus speaketh to the Messias: 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession:' and in the 72nd Psalm; 'His name,' it is said, 'shall endure for ever;' 'his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed; he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth:' and otherwere; 'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee:' and, 'I will,' saith God in Isaiah concerning him, 'give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth:' and, 'The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it:' 'The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God:' and, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles

(that is, the European nations) shall wait for his law:' and, 'In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined; and he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations:' and, 'In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and its rest shall be glorious:' and, 'I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name;' and, 'It shall come to pass in the last days,' say both Isaiah and Micah in the same words, 'that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it:' and, 'From the rising of the sun,' saith God in Malachi, 'even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering:' and, 'I,' saith God in Hosea, 'will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say unto them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God: in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God:' and, 'The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee,' saith God to his church; 'the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee:' 'Fear not, for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth:' and, 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear,' it is said to the Gentile church; 'break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord:' 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles; for thy Maker is thine husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name;) and thy Redeemer the Holy

One of Israel; The Lord of the whole earth shall be be called;' 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose,' &c.

Such is the nature and such the extent of the Messias's kingdom; now that Jesus hath erected and settled a kingdom of a spiritual and heavenly nature, (the which is therefore in his gospel styled the 'kingdom of heaven,' the 'kingdom of God,' the 'kingdom of Christ,' the 'kingdom that was to come,') whereof God is the absolute Sovereign; the throne whereof is in heaven above, which beareth sway in the souls of men; wherein God governeth in effectual manner, (most righteously and sweetly, with admirable wisdom, justice, and clemency; with mighty power also, and awful authority,) according to most excellent laws, by his holy word and powerful spirit; proposing most precious rewards to the obedient subjects thereof, and threatening dreadful punishments to the rebellious; protecting and saving the faithful people from all their enemies, (from the powers of darkness, from the temptations, allurements, menaces of the flesh and the world here, from death and hell hereafter;) that also Jesus (who, as Mediator between God and man, doth according to the gospel, by authority derived from God, and in God's name, administer the government hereof) hath in effect been avowed as Lord and King; that his authority hath had great efficacy on the minds and consciences of men; what noble trophies over sin and wickedness his word hath raised; in what glory and majesty through many ages he hath reigned, is evident from obvious records of history and from plain experience.

The extent of this spiritual empire raised by our Lord (of that doctrine which he taught, of that reformation which he introduced, of that church or spiritual society, knit together in faith and charity, which he founded, of that whole dispensation which he managed) is also thoroughly commensurate to the extent of whatever in these kinds the Messias was to achieve: the empire of Jesus in its nature and design, according to right and obligation, is declared universal and boundless, coextended with the world itself, and comprehending all generations of men; all nations being summoned to come under the wings of its jurisdiction; all persons being invited to partake the bene-

fits, and enjoy the privileges thereof: The Lord, and Judge of all men; the Saviour and Redeemer of the world; the common light of men; and Captain of human life; are titles which Jesus assumed to himself: 'All things are delivered to me of my Father;' 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh;' 'All judgment is committed to the Son;' yea, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and earth'—Such is the authority he claimeth and asserteth to himself: 'Going into the world, preach the gospel to every creature;' 'Go and discipline all nations, baptising them'—such was the commission and charge delivered by Jesus to his officers and ministers: 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;' 'The times of ignorance God having winked at, doth now invite all men every where to repent;' 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their sins;' 'God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the acknowlegement of the truth;' 'The gospel hath been preached to every creature under heaven'—so do the Apostles declare the latitude of the evangelical dispensation according to its nature and design; so that well may we cry out with Clemens Alexandrinus, 'Hearken ye that are afar off, hearken ye that are near; the word is not hid from any, it is a common light, it shineth to all men; there is no Cimmerian in respect to the gospel.'* So in design and of right is Jesus's doctrine and dispensation common to all nations and to all persons; all in duty are obliged to entertain it; all may have the benefit thereof who are fit and willing to embrace it; it doth not indeed obtrude its benefits on unwilling, and thence unworthy persons; it useth no unkindly violence or rude compulsion; but it alloweth, it inviteth, it entreateth, it engageth all men to come, excluding only those from a participation therein who will not hear its call, who do not like or love it.

In effect also this kingdom hath been very large and vast, a considerable part of the world having very soon been subjugated by its virtue, and having submitted thereto. 'As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming (or presence) of the Son of man be;'

* Clem. Al. Protrept.

said he concerning the sudden and effectual spreading of his doctrine; and the event answered his prediction; for the evangelical light did in an instant dart itself all about, so as in many places to dispel the night of ignorance, and to dissipate the fogs of wickedness; so that 'the utmost ends of the earth '(of which according to the most literal sense we ourselves are a most proper instance) are come under the possession and government of Jesus; are reduced to the acknowlegement and veneration of the only true God; do partake of God's favor, and hope in his mercy; do with good conscience (in that measure which is expectable from the natural infirmity and pravity of man, in various degrees, some more, some less strictly) serve God and obey his laws: a church and spiritual Zion, (spread over divers regions and countries, consisting of several nations and languages,) compacted in good order and sweet communion, hath through a long course of times visibly flourished in competent degrees of peace, prosperity, and glory; commending and cherishing true religion, charity, and sobriety; offering continual sacrifices of holy devotion unto God, celebrating the divine name and praises; producing many noble examples of all piety and virtue; a church in all regards adequate to the prophetical expressions concerning that which was out of the whole world to be collected and constituted by the Messias.

5. If we do singly compare the particular consequences and successes of the Messias's performances expressed by the prophets, we shall find an exact correspondence to what hath followed the undertakings and performances of our Lord.

They tell us that great opposition should be made against it by the Jews and by the Gentiles.

They tell us that the Messias's person should be acknowleged, worshipped, and blessed all over the world; 'All nations,' say they, 'shall serve him'—'all nations shall call him blessed:' this we see for almost seventeen hundred years abundantly performed in respect to Jesus, by the daily services of praise and thanksgiving yielded to him in the universal church.

They say that the knowlege of God shall be far extended and diffused over the world; 'The earth,' say they, 'shall be

full of the knowlege of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea:' this we see fulfilled by the large propagation of Christian doctrine.

They affirm that righteousness in the times of the Messias should commonly prosper and be in high request, according to that; 'In his days shall the righteous flourish:' so we see that virtue and piety have, ever since Jesus commended them to the world, enjoyed much repute; having been practised among the professors of his religion in such degrees and according to such manner, as the condition of this world, the humors of men, and the nature of human affairs do admit; nor reasonably can any prophecies be understood to mean farther.

They farther intimate that on the entertainment of the Messias's doctrine and law, abundance of peace and concord, of love and charity, of innocence and justice, should ensue; so that the fellow-subjects of this kingdom, although of different states and complexions, (the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the lion and the ox, the asp and the young child; that is, the rich and the poor, the mighty and the weak, the fierce and the gentle, the crafty and the simple sorts of men,) should live and converse together amicably, safely, and pleasantly, without molesting, wronging, oppressing, and devouring; but rather helping and benefiting each other; 'They shall not,' saith the prophet, 'hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain:' to the making good of which particular, the doctrine of Jesus doth temper and compose the minds of those who do truly understand and embrace it: such as are Christians indeed (careful followers of Jesus's rules and example) are thereby disposed to maintain peace and amity between themselves, yea to perform all offices of charity and kindness to one another, although their conditions in the world, their complexions, their endowments and abilities be however different; for the Christian doctrine representeth all that embrace it as fellow-servants of the same Lord, as brethren and children of the same Father, as members of the same body, as objects of the same divine regard and love, as partakers of the same privileges, professors of the same truth, consorts of the same hope, coheirs of the same glory and happiness, as thence united and allied to one another by the strictest bands and most endearing relations; hence it suppleth

the stoutest heart, and sweeteneth the fiercest tempers; it inclineth persons of highest state, power, wealth, knowlege, to condescensive humility and meekness toward the meanest, this reason presently occurring to every Christian mind, that a Christian brother is indeed contemptible, can without folly, may without sin be contemned: whence although Jesus's doctrine hath not quite removed wars and contentions out of the world, yea not out of that part thereof which doth acknowlege him, (for that were a thing impossible, without a total alteration of human nature, or rooting out of it those appetites of pride, voluptuousness, self-love, and covetousness, which are the seeds of strife; the effecting which it cannot be supposed that the prophets did intend,) yet hath it done considerably toward it; it hath disposed many persons (many great and considerable in the world) to a very just, innocent, and peaceable conversation; it hath kindled ardent love and compassion toward all mankind in many hearts! it hath produced great fruits of charity and bounty in persons of all sorts; it hath had no small influence on the common state of things, causing human affairs to be managed with much equity and gentleness, restraining outrageous iniquity and oppression.

It was also farther particularly foretold that great princes and potentates should submit to the Messias, seriously avowing his authority over them, yielding veneration to his name, and obedience to his laws; with their power and wealth promoting and encouraging the religion instituted by him, defending and cherishing his faithful people: 'All kings,' said the psalmist of him, 'shall fall before him; all nations shall do him service:' 'To a servant of rulers,' said Isaiah also of him, 'kings shall see and arise, princes also shall do worship:' and the same prophet concerning his church; 'Kings,' saith he, 'shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet:' 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;' 'The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee;' 'Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings;' 'The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.' All this we see plainly

to have been accomplished, for that soon the highest of earthly powers did submit and stoop thereto; that many great princes (great and glorious as even the world hath known any; such as Constantine, Theodosius, Charlemagne, and others of like illustrious renown) have willingly entertained Jesus's doctrine, and gladly undergone his yoke; that long successions of emperors and kings through the best frequented and most civilised part of the world have seriously professed themselves the subjects and servants of Jesus; expressing humble adoration of his person, and yielding observance to his laws; maintaining the profession of his religion by their power, supporting the ministers of it by their bounty, cherishing the practice thereof by manifold helps and encouragements; they have seemed ambitious of titles drawn from performances of this nature, affecting and glorying to be styled, Most Christian Kings, Catholic Kings, Defenders of the Faith, and Sons of the Church.

It was also to be a particular consequence of what the Messias should do, that by virtue of his performances idolatry (that is, the worship of wicked spirits, or of fictitious deities) should in a conspicuous manner be vanquished, driven away, and destroyed; the worship of the only true God being substituted in its room; 'The Lord alone,' saith Isaiah concerning his times, 'shall be exalted in that day, and the idols he shall utterly abolish:' and, 'It shall come to pass,' saith Zechariah, 'in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the name of the idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered; and also I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land.' Now this we know was soon effected by the doctrine of our Lord, in a most remarkable manner: idolatry, in all places where it came, did flee and vanish before it; the Devil's frauds (whereby he so long had abused and befooled mankind) being detected, and that authority, which he had usurped over the world, being utterly disavowed; all the pack of infernal apostate spirits being not only rejected and disclaimed, but scorned and detested. Jesus (as the gospel telleth us, and as experience confirmeth) did combat the strong one, did baffle and bind him; he disarmed and rifled him; he triumphed over him, and exposed him to shame;

he cast him out, and dissolved all his works. At the appearance of Jesus's doctrine, and the sound of his name, his altars were deserted, his temples fell down, his oracles were struck dumb, his arts were supplanted, all his worship and kingdom were quite subverted. The sottish adoration of creatures (by the suggestion also of Satan, and by man's vain fancy, advanced to a participation of divine honor) was also presently banished, and thrown away; the only true God (the Maker and Lord of all things) being thenceforth acknowleged and adored as the only fountain of good, and the sole object of worship.

Again, whereas in regard to all these performances the state of things constituted by the Messias is described so different from the former state of mankind, that it is called the creation of a new world: 'For behold,' saith God in Isaiah concerning the Messias's times, 'I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind,' (whence the Jews commonly before our Lord's time were used to call the Messias's time, the world to come, the future age;) it is plain that Jesus may well be esteemed to have accomplished the intent of those expressions; he (as the ἐπανορθωτὴς τοῦ κόσμου, the rectifier and rearer of the world, as Origen* calleth him) having wrought so huge alterations in the minds, and hearts, and lives of men, in their principles and opinions, in their dispositions and in their practices; having so changed the face of affairs, and reformed the course of things in the world; bringing men out of lamentable darkness and error into clear light and knowlege, rescuing them from superstition, impiety, and wickedness, and engaging them into ways of true religion, holiness, and righteousness; so many persons being apparently 'renewed in the spirit of their minds;' being made 'new creatures, created according to God in righteousness and true holiness;' so that, as the Apostle speaks, 'old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;' so that what the contumacious Jews in anger and ill-will did call Jesus's instruments, had a true sense; they were οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες, they 'who had turned the world upside down;' they did so indeed, but so as to settle it in a better posture.

* Orig. in Cels. 3.

Concerning which good effects of Christian religion the ancient Christians had good reason to glory, and to say with Origen; 'The adversaries of Christianism do not discern how many men's diseases of soul, and how many floods of vices, have been restrained; and how many men's savage manners have been tamed by reason of the Christian doctrine; wherefore being satisfied with the public beneficialness thereof, which by a new method doth free men from many mischiefs, they ought willingly to render thanks thereto, and to yield testimony, if not to the truth of it, yet to its profitableness to mankind.'*

There remain behind several important considerations appertaining to this purpose, concerning the performance of the Messias, and events about him; his being to suffer grievous things from men, and for men; his performing miraculous works; the yielding various attestations from heaven to his person and doctrine; from the congruity of which particulars to what Jesus did endure and act; and to what God hath done in regard to him, the truth of our conclusion, that 'Jesus is the very Christ,' will be manifest: but time now forbiddeth the prosecution of those matters; and I must therefore reserve it to other occasion.

Now, 'To him that is able to keep from falling, and to present us blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now, and for ever.'

'Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.' Amen.

'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

'Salvation be unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.'

'Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.' Amen.

'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and

* Orig. in Cels. lib. i. p. 50.

riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.'

'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XIX.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

BRIEF repetition of what has been done: we now proceed to show that Jesus was the Messias, from other very considerable particulars foretold, and suiting to him; and first from those things which the Messias was to undergo and suffer.

The humble birth, the sufferings, and the death of the Messias as predicted, set forth: yet all this the Jews, though they expected a Messias, did not, and hardly could believe: reasons of this given; and their conduct described when Jesus did appear: prejudices even of his disciples. This degradation, of all things notifying the Messias, was that which the Jews would not acknowlege; and this in fact caused them to overlook all *the rest*, however clear. Yet notwithstanding their (affected) blindness, there is no particular concerning the Messias in the ancient Scripture either more frequently glanced at, or more clearly expressed. *Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.*

For the explaining and confirming which truth, a digression is here made concerning the nature of divine presignifications. We may consider then, that the allwise God, having before eternal times determined in due season to send the Messias for accomplishing his great design, did by his incomprehensible providence so order things, that all the special dispensations preceding it, should have a fit tendency and reference thereto; so that when it came on the stage it should appear the main plot; &c. Hence the most eminent men whom he raised up and employed in his affairs tending to this end, as they did re-

semble the Messias in being instruments of his particular grace and providence, (being as it were inferior Christs and mediators, &c.) so were they ordered to represent him in several circumstances of their lives, and divers actions, &c.: so also the rites and services instituted by them were adapted to the same purpose. Thus was Adam a type of Christ. Thus also Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, Moses, David, &c., are intimated to have been such. *They served to the* subindication and *shadowing of heavenly things.* This in particular true of David.

It is also to be observed that, because those eminent servants of God were representatives of Christ, many things are spoken of them as such; many things are ascribed unto them, which only or chiefly were intended of him; their names are used as veils to cover divers things concerning him, which it seemed not to Divine Wisdom convenient to disclose promiscuously to all men: this topic enlarged on. Many circumstances also are attributed, not only to persons, but to things, which do not intirely agree with them: many things were promised, which appear never to be accomplished, except after an improper and hyperbolical manner of expression: this point enlarged on, and instances given.

Neither are these only said according to suppositions assumed in the New Testament, but they agree, as to their general importance, with the sense of the ancient Jews, who conceived such mysterious references often to lie couched under the letter of their Scriptures, in which they supposed there was a *midrash*, or mystical sense: this enlarged on.

These things being premised, we return and say, that the Messias being to suffer, was in various passages of the ancient Scriptures prefigured: this topic dilated on, and instances specified.

Which being admitted, on a comparison of the passages which we have there with what actually befel Jesus, we shall

find an admirable harmony: this instanced by various quotations respecting his low and despicable estate; the hatred and persecution of his enemies, &c.; his desertion by his followers; the sense of God's withholding his favor and help; his charity and conduct towards his persecutors; &c.

But there are not only oblique intimations, shrouded under the cover of other names, but direct and immediate predictions concerning the Messias's being to suffer: the whole 53rd chapter of Isaiah specified as an example. The same things are also by parts clearly predicted in other places of this prophet, and in other Scriptures: instances given: from which passages we may well say with our Lord, *that thus it was written, and thus,* according to prediction, it was to happen, that the *Messias should suffer,* in a life of penury and contempt, in a death of shame and sorrow.

That it was thus to be, might also be inferred from the qualities of the Messias's person, and the nature of his performances, such as they are described in Scripture: this point enlarged on and explained. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XIX.

THAT JESUS IS THE TRUE MESSIAS.

ACTS, CHAP. IX.—VERSE 22.

—Proving that Jesus is the Christ.

WHAT is the true notion of the name or title Christ, we (in discoursing formerly on this text) did explain. That one person, to whom that notion signally doth agree, was by God's especial determination to come into the world, we did also in the next place, from prophetical instruction (backed with the common tradition and current opinion of God's people) declare. We farther in the sequel did propound to show that Jesus (whom we acknowlege) was that very person; the Messias predicted by the prophets, and expected by the Jews. This we have already (in the foregoing discourses) proved from several circumstances of his birth and coming among men; from his personal qualifications, and from divers illustrious performances managed by him, in correspondency to what the prophets foretold concerning the Messias. The same we now proceed to confirm from other very considerable particulars foretold by them, and suiting to him; and first from those things, which the Messias was to undergo and suffer.

That the Messias was to come in a humble and homely manner, (without appearances of worldly splendor or grandeur;) that he was to converse among men in a state of external poverty and meanness; that he was to be disregarded and de-

spised by men; that he was to cause offences, and to find oppositions in his proceedings; that he was to be repulsed and rejected, to be scorned and hated, to be disgracefully and hardly treated, to be grievously persecuted and afflicted; yea, that at last he was to be prosecuted, condemned, and executed as a malefactor, is a truth which the Jews (although they firmly believed and earnestly expected the coming of a Messias) did not, and indeed were hardly capable to entertain. It was a point repugnant to the whole frame of their conceits, yea inconsistent with the nature and drift of their religion, as they understood it. For their religion in its surface (deeper than which their gross fancy could not penetrate) did represent earthly wealth, dignity, and prosperity as things highly valuable; did propound them as very proper (if not as the sole) rewards of piety and obedience; did imply consequently the possession of them to be certain arguments of the divine good-will and regard; they could not therefore but esteem poverty, affliction, and disgrace, as curses from heaven, and plain indications of God's disfavor toward those on whom they fell: they particularly did conceit that to be rich was a necessary qualification to a prophet, (no less necessary, than to be of a good complexion, of a good capacity, of a good life;) *Spiritus Dei non requiescit super pauperem*; 'the Spirit of God rests not on a poor man,' (that is, no special communications of grace, wisdom, goodness, are ever by God afforded to persons of a low or afflicted condition,) was a rule they had framed, and which passed among them. That he therefore, who was designed to be so notable a prophet; who was to have the honor of being so special an instrument of promoting God's service and glory; who therefore must be so highly favored by God, should appear despicable, and undergo great afflictions, was a notion that could not but seem very absurd, could not otherwise than be very abominable to them. They had also (in congruity to those prejudices, abetted by that extreme self-love and self-flattery, which were peculiar to that nation) raised in themselves a strong opinion that the Messias was to come in a great visible state and power; to do acts of great prowess and renown, to bring the nations of the world

into subjection under him, and so to reign among them in glorious majesty and prosperity. When Jesus therefore (however otherwise answerable in his circumstances, qualifications, and performances to the prophetical characters of the Messias) did appear, such as he did, with pretences (or intimations rather) that he was the Messias, their stomach rose at it, they were hugely offended at him, they deemed him not only a madman (one possessed or distracted) and an impostor, but a blasphemer; for to be no less than blasphemy they took it, for so pitiful a wretch to arrogate unto himself so high a dignity, so near a relation to God, as the being the Messias did import. We see even the disciples of our Lord so deeply tainted with this national prejudice, that (even after they had acknowleged him to be the Christ) they could not with patience hear him foretelling what should befall him, (St. Peter, on that occasion, even just after he had confessed him to be the Christ, did, as the text says, take him, and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Be it far from thee, Lord.') Yea, presently after that he most plainly had described his sufferings to them, they could not forbear dreaming of kingdoms, and being grandees in them; yea, even after our Lord's passion and resurrection this fancy still possessed them; for even then they demand of him whether he would 'at that time restore the kingdom unto Israel,' (meaning such an external visible kingdom.)

This hence of all things notifying the Messias seems to be the only particular which in general the Jews did not, or would not, see and acknowlege; and this caused them to oversee all the rest, how clearly soever shining in and about the person of Jesus. This cloud hindered them from discerning the excellency of his doctrine, from regarding the sanctity of his life, from being affected with the wonderfulness of his works; from minding or crediting all the testimonies ministered from heaven unto him. This, as St. Paul tells us, was the great scandal which obstructed their embracing the gospel. We cannot therefore here, as in other particulars, allege the general consent of God's people, in expounding the prophets according to our sense; this being one of those points, in respect to which the prophets did foresee and foretell their perverse stupidity

and incredulity; that they should 'look and not see, hear and not understand;' yielding herein special occasion to that complaint, 'Who hath believed our report?'

Yet notwithstanding their (affected) blindness, there is no particular concerning the Messias, in the ancient Scripture, either more frequently (in way of mystical insinuation, or adumbration) glanced at, or more clearly (in direct and plain language) expressed, or which also by reasonable deductions thence may be inferred more strongly than this. St. Peter affirms that 'God had foreshowed it by the mouth of all his prophets' (not only of some, but of all his prophets:) the same our Lord himself did signify before his departure to his disciples out of Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms, showing them this particular, and opening their minds to understand the Scriptures concerning it; concluding his discourse to them thus, Ὅτι οὕτω γέγραπται, καὶ οὕτως ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν, 'Thus it was written, and thus ought Christ (according to the prophetical presignifications and predictions) to suffer.'

For the explaining and confirming of which truth, let us presume here to make a preparatory discourse or digression (not unseasonable perhaps, or improper to our purpose) concerning the nature of divine presignifications, which may serve to declare the pertinency of many citations produced out of the ancient Scripture in the New Testament, (the which, together with others connected to them, or bearing analogy to them, we also, being assured of their design by the authority of our Lord and his Apostles, may safely presume after them to apply to the same purposes.) We may then consider that the allwise God (who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and to whom all things are present) having before eternal times, as St. Paul speaketh, determined in due time to send the Messias for accomplishing the greatest design that ever was to be managed in this world, (which should bring the highest glory to himself, and procure the greatest benefit to the principal of his creatures here,) did by his incomprehensible providence so order things, that all the special dispensations preceding it should have a fit tendency and advantageous reference thereto; so that when it came on the stage, it might appear that the main of the plot consisted therein, and that whatever before was

acted, had a principal respect thereto. As therefore from the beginning of things God did in a gradual method make real preparations toward it, by steps imparting discoveries of his mind about it, or in order to it, (somewhat to Adam himself, more to Abraham and the patriarchs, somewhat farther to Moses, much more yet to divers of the prophets among his chosen people, who not only foretold largely concerning it, but delivered several instructions conformable to it, and nearly conducing to the promoting thereof;) so he did also take especial care by many apposite resemblances, handsomely inserted into all his dispensations, to set it out, and to insinuate his meaning about it; that so at length it might show itself with more solemnity, and less surprise. The most eminent persons therefore, whom he raised up and employed in his affairs tending to that end, as they did resemble the Messias in being instruments of his particular grace and providence (being indeed inferior Christs and mediators, and partial saviours of his people, as they are sometimes called,) so they were ordered in several circumstances of their persons, in divers actions they did, in the principal accidents befalling them, to represent him; as also the rites and services instituted by them were adapted to the same purpose; they and all things about them being fitted by God's especial wise care, so as to be congruous emblems and shadows presignifying the Christ, and what appertained to him; his circumstances and accidents, his performances, his institutions. Thus was Adam, as St. Paul calls him, a type of Christ; Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Zorobabel, are also intimated to have been such; the most signal things done by them, or befalling them, having been suited to answer somewhat that was remarkable concerning him; we may say of them all, as the Apostle to the Hebrews says of the Jewish priests; 'They served to the subindication and shadowing of heavenly things' (*οἵτινες ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ λατρεύουσι τῶν ἐπουρανίων.*) In David particularly this relation is so plain, that because thereof often (as we before noted) in the prophets, (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea,) the Messias is called by his name. It indeed well suited the dignity of this great person, and the importance of his business, that he should have such notable ushers, heralds, and har-

bingers 'going before his face;' furnished with conspicuous badges and ensigns denoting their relation to him; it was proper that God should appear always to have had an express care and especial regard toward him. It consequently serves for our edification; for that we duly comparing things, and discerning this admirable correspondence, may be somewhat instructed thereby, and somewhat confirmed in our faith; may be excited to the admiration of God's wisdom and goodness, (so provident for our good;) may also be induced thereby the more highly to adore the Messias, and to esteem his design. 'All these things' (saith St. Paul, having compared divers things concerning Moses to things concerning Christ) 'happened as types, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come.' It is also (for illustration, and also for proof of these things) to be observed that, because those eminent servants of God were representatives of Christ, many things are spoken of them as such; many things are ascribed to them, which only or chiefly were intended of him; their names are used as veils to cover divers things concerning him, which it seemed not to divine wisdom convenient or seasonable in a more open and clear manner to disclose promiscuously to all men, (why God should choose to express things of this nature in such a manner, we need not to determine; it may be perhaps for reasons best known to himself, and above our ken or cognisance; yet probable reasons may be assigned for it, yea some more than probable being hinted in Scripture; it may be for a decent and harmonious distinction of times, of dispensations, of persons; it may be from the depth of things to conciliate a reverence to them, and to raise the price of knowing them, by the difficulty of doing so; it may be to exercise and improve men's understanding, to inflame their desire, to excite their industry, to provoke their devotion, to render them humble; it may be to reward an honest and diligent study of God's word; it may be for occasion of freely conveying special gifts of interpretation; it may be to conceal some things from some persons unfit or unworthy to know them, especially from persons haughty and self-conceited; it may be to use the ignorance of some as a means to produce some great event, ('If they had known, they would not have

crucified the Lord of glory;') it cannot be supposed necessary that all things should be plainly discovered to all persons; it is evident that some things are purposely couched in parabolical and mysterious expression; it is particularly the manner of prophetical instruction frequently to involve things, the full and clear knowlege of which is not congruous to every season and every capacity: but to return from out of this parenthesis to our case.) That under the names of persons representing Christ (or of things we may add adumbrating his things) many things are intimated concerning him and his dispensations, may be collected and confirmed from hence, that many things are attributed to persons (and to things also) which do not agree to them; many things were promised, which appear never accomplished, except after a very improper and hyperbolical manner of expression, or according to an enormous wideness of interpretation; such as doth not well suit to the nature of true histories and serious promises. Thus, for instance, are many things foretold concerning the large extent and prosperous estate of the Jewish church, which history and experience testify never (according to strictness of literal acception, yea not in any tolerable degree near the height of what the words import) to have happened. Thus also, as the Apostle to the Hebrews well argueth, effects are attributed to the Jewish rites and sacrifices, which according to the nature of the thing cannot belong to them, otherwise than as shadows and substitutes of higher things. Thus also what is with solemn oath promised to Solomon (concerning the vast extent and endless duration of his empire in righteousness, peace, and prosperity; together with his mighty acts and victorious achievements) doth not appear directly in any competent measure to have been performed. Thus also David, as St. Peter observes and argues in the second of the Acts, speaketh many things of himself, which cannot be conceived properly and literally agreeable to him. Such things therefore are reasonably supposed to be intimations of somewhat appertaining to the future more perfect state of things under the Messias; to concern him (who was to be the end of the law) and his dispensation, which was to contain the accomplishment of all things predicted and presignified. This is that which St. Austin signifies when he

says, 'Which Christ' (saith he, 'and what concerns him')—'all the promises of that nation, all their prophecies, priesthoods, sacrifices, their temple, and altogether all their sacraments did resound, or express.'*

Neither are these things only said according to suppositions assumed in the New Testament, but they agree (as to their general importance) to the sense of the ancient Jews, who did conceive such mysterious references often to lie couched under the letter of their Scriptures. They supposed a *midrash* or mystical sense of Scripture, which they very studiously (even to excess commonly) did search after. It was, as Lud. Capellus affirms,† a confident and constant opinion of their doctors, that all things in Moses's law were typical, and capable of mystical exposition. And Philo's writings (composed in or immediately after our Saviour's times) are a plain confirmation of what he saith; we have also several instances and intimations thereof in the New Testament. Neither probably would the Apostles in their discourses and disputations with the Jews have used this way of interpreting and citing passages of Scripture, if they in general had not admitted and approved it.

Now these things being (cursorily) premised, we return into our way, and say that the Messias's being to suffer was in divers passages of the ancient Scripture prefigured. Supposing the thing itself should be, there is a peculiar reason why it should be so represented, thus expressed by Tertullian:‡ 'The sacrament indeed,' saith he, 'of Christ's passion ought to have been figured in the (ancient) predications; forasmuch as that the more incredible it was, if it should have been preached nakedly, the more offensive it would have been; and the more magnificent it was, the more it was to be shaded, that the difficulty of understanding it might cause the seeking of God's grace.' Supposing also it should be, the passages about Abel, Isaac, Josias, Jeremiah, (and the like,) may congruously be applied thereto; the elevation of the brazen serpent, and the killing of the paschal lamb, may appositely represent it; the Jewish

* Aug. ad Volus. Ep. iii. † In Exerc. ad Zohar.
‡ Tertull. in Judæos, cap. 10.

priests, with all their sacrifices, may also with reason be brought in and accommodated thereto: these things are not indeed by themselves alone apt peremptorily to evince that it should be; yet do they handsomely suit it, and adorn the supposition thereof, according to the notion we touched about the typical relation between the matters of the old world before the Messias, and those of the new one after him. But with a clearer evidence and stronger force we may affirm that the Messias's sufferings were implied in the afflictions of his representative king David, such as he in several Psalms (the 35th, 69th, 109th, 118th, and especially in the 22nd Psalm) describeth them: wherein divers passages (expressing the extreme sadness and forlornness of his condition) occur, which by the history of his life do not so well, according to the literal signification of words, appear congruous to his person; which therefore there is a necessity, or (at least) much reason, that they should be applied to the Messias, whom David did represent.

Which being admitted, comparing then the passages we have there to what befell Jesus, we shall find an admirable harmony, there being scarce any part of his affliction in his life, or any circumstance thereof at his death, which is not in emphatical and express terms there set out. There we have expressed his low and despicable estate; ('I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and despised of the people.')—The causeless hatred and enmity of the populacy and of the great ones toward him; ('They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: they compassed me about with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause.') The ingrateful requital made to him for all the good done by him, and intended by him; ('They rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love')—Their rejecting him; ('The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone in the corner.') Their insidious and calumnious proceedings against him; (Without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul:' and, 'False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not:' and, 'The mouth of the

wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.') Their bitter insulting over him in his affliction; ('But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea the abjects gathered themselves together against me:' 'They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded:' καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄλγος τῶν τραυμάτων μου προσέθηκαν, 'and to the smart of wounds they added,' say the LXX.) Their scornful reviling, flouting, and mocking him; ('All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot the lip; they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.' 'I became a reproach unto them: when they looked on me they shaked their heads.' 'They opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, Aha! our eye hath seen it.' Ἐπείρασαν με, ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με μυκτηρισμὸν, ἔβρυξαν ἐπ' ἐμὲ τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτῶν· 'They tempted me, they extremely mocked me, they gnashed their teeth on me.') The cruel manner of their dealing with him; ('Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare on me.')—Their dealing with him when in his distress he called for some refreshment; ('They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink')—Their disposal of his garments on his suffering; ('They part my garments among them, and cast lots on my vesture')—His being deserted of his friends, and destitute of all consolation; ('I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children: I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none')—The sense of God's withholding his favor and help; ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me?') His charitable disposition and behavior toward his persecutors; ('But as for me, when they were sick, (or as the LXX, 'when they did trouble me,' Ἐν τῷ αὐτοὺς παρενοχλεῖν μοι,) my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom; I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth

for his mother.') Which passages and the like, how patly and punctually they do square to respective passages in the gospels, I need not to show; we do all, I suppose, well enough remember that both most doleful and comfortable history, to be able ourselves to make the application.

But there are not only such oblique intimations, shrouded under the coverture of other persons and names, but direct and immediate predictions concerning the Messias's being to suffer most clearly expressed. That whole famous chapter in Isaiah (the 53rd chapter) doth most evidently and fully declare it, wherein the kind, manner, causes, ends, and consequences of his sufferings, together with his behavior under them, are graphically represented. His appearing meanness; ('He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him')—The disgrace, contempt, repulses, and rejection he underwent; ('He is despised and rejected of men—we hid our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not')—His afflicted state; ('He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted')—The bitter and painful manner of his affliction; ('He was stricken; bore stripes, was wounded, was bruised')—His being accused, adjudged, and condemned as a malefactor; ('He was taken from prison and from judgment—he was numbered among the transgressors')—His consequent death; ('He poured out his soul unto death; He was cut out of the land of the living')—The design and end of his sufferings; they were appointed and inflicted by Divine Providence for our sake, and in our stead; for the expiation of our sins, and our salvation; ('It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin:'—'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was on him; and with his stripes we are healed:'—'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:'—'For the transgression of my people he was smitten:'—'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all')—His sustaining all this with a willing patience and meekness; ('He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a

sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth') —His charitable praying for his persecutors; so that may be understood, ('He made intercession for the transgressors')— The consequence and success of his sufferings; ('He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowlege shall my righteous servant justify many;' and, 'I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.') Which passages as they most exactly suit to Jesus, and might in a manner constitute an historical narration of what he did endure, together with the opinions taught in the gospel concerning the intent and effect of his sufferings; so that they did (according to the intention of the Divine Spirit) relate to the Messias, may from several considerations be apparent; the context and coherence of all this passage with the preceding and subsequent passage, which plainly respect the Messias, and his times: 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!' and, 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently,' &c. are passages immediately going before, of which this 53rd chapter is but a continuation; and immediately after it followeth, 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear,' &c. being a very elegant and perspicuous description of the church augmented by accession of the Gentiles, which was to be brought to pass by the Messias. The general scope of this whole prophecy argues the same; and the incongruity of this particular prediction to any other person imaginable beside the Messias doth farther evince it; so high are the things which are attributed to the suffering person; as that he should 'bear the sins' of all God's people, and heal them; that he should 'by his knowlege justify many;' that 'the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand;' that God would 'divide him a portion with the great,' and that he should 'divide the spoil with the strong;' the magnificency and importance of which things do well agree to the Messias, but not to any other person: whence if the ancient Jews had reason to believe a Messias, they had as much reason to apply this place to him as any other, and to acknowlege he was to be a great sufferer; and indeed divers

of the ancient Targumists and most learned Rabbins did expound this place of the one Messias that was to come, as the *Pugio Fidei* and other learned writers do by several testimonies show. This place also discovers the vanity of that figment devised by some later Jews, who, to evade and oppose Jesus, affirmed there was to be a double Messias, (one who should be much afflicted, the other who should greatly prosper,) since we may observe that here both great afflictions and glorious performances are ascribed to the same person.

The same things are also by parts clearly predicted in other places of this prophet, and in other Scriptures: by Isaiah again in the chapter immediately foregoing; 'Behold,' saith he, 'my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high,' (there is God's servant (he that is in way of excellency such, that is, in this prophet's style, the Messias) in his real glorious capacity; it follows concerning his external appearance,) 'his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:' and again, in the 49th chapter, 'Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One; To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship.' What can be more express and clear, than that the Messias, who should subject the world, with its sovereign powers, to the acknowlegement and adoration of himself, was to be despised by men, to be detested by the Jews, and to appear in a servile and base condition? The same prophet again brings him in speaking thus: 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' His offending the Jews and aggravating their sins is also expressed by this same prophet; 'And,' saith he, 'he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.' The opposition also he should receive is signified in the second Psalm; 'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.' The prophet Zechariah doth also in several places very roundly express his sufferings: his low condition in those words; 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee

lowly, (pauper,) and riding on an ass:' his manner of death in those; 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:' and again; 'I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look on me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn,' &c. The prophet Daniel also in that place, from which probably the name Messias was taken, and which most expressly mentions him, saith, that 'after threescore and two weeks the Messias shall be cut off, but not for himself.' Now from these passages of Scripture we may well say with our Lord; Ὅτι οὕτω γέγραπται, καὶ οὕτως ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν· 'That thus it was written,' and thus, according to the prophet's foretelling, it was to happen, that the 'Messias should suffer;' suffer in a life of penury and contempt, in a death of shame and sorrow.

That it was to be thus might also be inferred by reasons grounded on the qualities of the Messias's person, and the nature of his performances, such as they are described in the Scripture. He was to be really and to appear plainly a person of most admirable virtue and good worth; but never was there or can be any such, (as even Pagan philosophers, Plato, Seneca, and others, have observed) without undergoing the trial of great affliction. He was to be an universal pattern to men of all sorts, (especially to the greatest part, that is, to the poor,) of all righteousness; to exemplify particularly the most difficult pieces of duty, (humility, patience, meekness, charity, self-denial, intire resignation to God's will;) this he should not have opportunity or advantage of doing, if his condition had been high, wealthy, splendid, and prosperous. He was to exercise pity and sympathy towards all mankind; the which to do it was requisite he should feel the inconveniences and miseries incident to mankind. He was to advance the repute of spiritual and eternal goods; and to depress the value of those corporeal and temporal things which men vainly admire; the most ready and compendious way of doing this was by an exemplary neglecting and refusing worldly enjoyments, (the honors, profits, and pleasures here.) He was by gentle and peaceable

means to erect a spiritual kingdom, to subdue the hearts and consciences of men to the love and obedience of God, to raise in men the hopes of future rewards and blessings in heaven; to the accomplishment of which purposes temporal glory had been rather prejudicial than conducible. He was to manage his great designs by means supernatural and divine, the which would be more conspicuous by the visible meanness and impotency of his state. He was to merit most highly from God for himself and for all men; this he could not do so well as in enduring for God's sake and ours the hardest things. He was to save men, and consequently to appease God's wrath and satisfy his justice by the expiation of our sins; this required that he should suffer what we had deserved. But reasons of this kind I partly before touched, and shall hereafter have occasion to prosecute more fully in treating on the article of our Saviour's passion.

Now that Jesus (our Lord) did most thoroughly correspond to whatever is in this kind declared concerning the Messias, we need not by relating minutely the known history of his life and death make out farther; since the whole matter is palpably notorious, and no adversary will deny it. I conclude this point with St. Peter's words, (for the illustration and proof of which this discourse hath been made;) 'But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.'

SUMMARY OF SERMON XX.

JOHN, CHAP. V.—VERSE 37.

OUR Lord, here and in the context, affirms that Almighty God his Father had granted him several kinds of extraordinary attestation, sufficient to convince all well-disposed persons that he truly was the predicted Messias: it is now intended to represent those several ways of divine attestation, &c. But first some reasons are assigned why it was requisite that they should be afforded to our Lord.

1. The nature of the Messias's office required such attestations. So high and eminent was it; so new, strange, and important was his revelation; that the excellency of his doctrine, the sanctity of his life, the wisdom of his discourse, &c. would not have been enough to produce faith and submission: this topic enlarged on and explained.

2. The effects which he was to produce required such. So great were the exploits he was to achieve against sin and Satan, that they could not have been encountered without remarkable testimonies of the divine presence, especial aids of the divine power, and large influences of the divine Spirit: this enlarged on.

3. We may farther consider that *the Christ* was designed to present himself first to the Jews, that is, to a people wholly addicted to this sort of proof, and incapable of conviction by any other: they did not, as did *the Greeks, seek wisdom, but required a sign.*

4. It was agreeable to God's usual method of proceeding in

cases resembling this, although very unequal thereto in weight and consequence: this shown at large.

5. If we consider the *general* reasons assignable, why God hath been wont to proceed in this manner, or why he should use it on *any* occasion, they are with strongest force applicable to this case: this explained.

But in opposition to this, it may be said that no such testifications can well serve to such purpose; for that the like have been and may be applied to the persuasion of error and impiety, by *false prophets* and *antichrists*, by *magicians* and *wizards*.

This objection answered generally: also in a more distinct and particular manner.

Having thus showed reasons why, and signified to what purposes, the Messias was to receive special testimonies from God, we proceed to survey those which were in fact exhibited.

1. God did attest to him long before his coming, by presignifying and predicting at several times, in several ways, by several persons, many and indeed all considerable things concerning him. This however is a matter of very large consideration, which has been already insisted on, and may be now omitted.

2. God did in attestation to him immediately send before his face, as his herald and harbinger, a prophet, or *one more than a prophet*, for his extraordinary integrity, &c.: this topic enlarged on.

3. God attested unto our Lord by visible apparitions from heaven, at several times, in fit seasons, made in presence of very good witnesses: this shown.

4. He also by vocal attestation did expressly at several times own and approve Jesus; as at his baptism, his transfiguration, &c.

5. God attested to our Lord, in that he was endued with a

power constantly residing in him of performing miraculous works, such as could only proceed from a divine source; works of a stupendous greatness and difficulty: such specified: works proper unto God; such also specified: the manner also of their performance seemed to emulate the creative power of God, &c.: they had also no less of goodness than of greatness divine: considering which things, we may well discern by what power, and to what purpose Jesus did perform his admirable works: the multitude of them, and the various places in which they were performed, considered: we may observe that he did not affect to perform wonders out of any vanity, or to humor men's curiosity; but from piety and charity, and other righteous causes: this topic enlarged on. We may also, with Irenæus, observe that Jesus, in performing his cures and other miracles, never used any profane, silly, fantastic ceremonies, &c.: that also the whole tenor of his proceedings was directly levelled against the kingdom of darkness and power of Satan, &c. Whence we may well apprehend the validity of our Lord's own argument for confirming John the Baptist in his opinion of him; *go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard*, &c.

6. God did most signally attest to our Lord by miraculously raising him from the dead; or in that by a divine power he raised up himself from the grave; which is indeed the point that invincibly guards and fortifies all other testimonies; but its discussion would require more time than can be now spared.

7. A farther attestation was given to our Lord by the power of working miracles in his name imparted to the disciples; who were by him commissioned to prosecute the great design which he had commenced: this topic enlarged on.

8. God also did attest to our Lord by accomplishing his prediction and promise, in a plentiful effusion of the divine Spirit on his church and followers, for their instruction, guidance, comfort, and support: this subject dilated on.

9. Lastly, God has attested unto him by the wonderful success which has attended his gospel, in its conveyance and propagation. They were *not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble,* but a very few, mean and poor, unlearned and simple men, whom no outward circumstances or worldly advantages recommended, who boldly set about this great work, &c.

All their great exploits they were to achieve in a most quiet peaceable manner, without any terror or tumult, without any plausibility of language, or subtilty of reasoning, &c.: they were indeed to do little more than barely report a story, and affirm it true of their own knowlege, &c. and with such *weapons of their warfare,* God's help concurring, they did *pull down strong holds,* &c., and did maintain their cause.

The little plausibility of this cause; the few apparent inducements to embrace it; its doctrines so adverse to worldly gratifications, &c. considered. Now to what or to whom is it to be ascribed, that a handful of such persons, against such obstacles, in ways so different from the course of human proceedings, &c. were able to render such a cause victorious? This point enlarged on.

Having thus seen how Jesus our Lord is the Messias, let us briefly recapitulate, and explain in what manner, and in what respects the New Testament represents him as *Christ;* how, according to that, Jesus was signally chosen and consecrated by God, supereminently, to all the offices denoted by the title *Christ,* and how he effectually executes them.

Him, saith St. Peter in general, God anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, &c.: he was by this unction constituted in right and effect a *Prophet,* a *King,* a *Priest.*

1. A *Prophet:* for they were not mistaken, who, on his raising the widow's child, were *amazed, and glorified God, saying, that a great prophet was raised up among them,* &c. This topic enlarged on and illustrated.

2. He is also a King, by many unquestionable titles: by *nature* and *birth*, as the only Son of God, &c.; by divine *designation* and appointment, for *God hath made him Lord and Christ*, &c.: also by *merit* and *purchase*, &c. This topic enlarged on.

3. He is likewise a *Priest*, and that much above an ordinary one: *he hath obtained a more excellent function*, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, than any other priest had: this head dilated on.

IV. The consideration of these things ought to beget in us a practice answerable to the relations between him and us, grounded thereon.

If Jesus be such a *Prophet*, we must with docile mind hearken to his admonitions, believe his doctrine, and obey what he teaches.

If he be a *King*, we must hold fast our due allegiance to him, pay him reverence, and submit to his laws, &c. If he be a *Priest*, we must with sincere faith and hope apply ourselves unto him for, and rely on, his spiritual ministry in our behalf, &c.

In short, if *Jesus* be *Christ*, let us be *Christians*; Christians, not only in name, but in very deed and reality, &c. Conclusion.

And in Jesus Christ, &c.

SERMON XX.

THAT JESUS IS THE TRUE MESSIAS.

JOHN, CHAP. V.—VERSE 37.

And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.

JESUS, our Lord, here and in the context doth affirm that Almighty God, his Father, had granted unto him several kinds of extraordinary attestation, sufficient to convince all well-disposed persons, unto whom they shall be discovered, that he truly was that Messias, whom God before all beginning of time had designed, and frequently by his prophets had promised to send for the reformation of the world and salvation of mankind: to represent those several ways of divine attestation with some reflexions on them, serving both to the confirmation of our faith, and improving our affection and our reverence thereto, is my chief design at this time.

But first, in preparation to what we shall say concerning those particulars, and for declaration of the divine wisdom in this manner of proceeding, I shall assign some reasons why it was requisite that such attestations should be afforded to our Lord.

1. The nature of the Messias's office required such attestations; for since he was designed to the most eminent employment that ever was or could be committed to any person; since

he was to reveal things no less great and important than new and strange; since he was to assume a most high authority unto himself; since he was to speak and act all in the name of God; since also all men under great penalties were obliged to yield credit and obedience to him, there was great reason that God should appear to authorise him; that he should be able to produce God's hand and seal to his commission; for that otherwise he might have been suspected of imposture; his doctrine might have been rejected, his authority disclaimed, and his design frustrated, without great blame, or however without men's being convincible of blame: for well might the people suspect that person, who, professing to come in such a capacity an extraordinary agent from heaven, brought no credentials thence, (no evidence of God's especial favor and assistance;) well might they reject that new doctrine, which God vouchsafed not by any signal testimony to countenance; well might they disclaim that authority, which offering to introduce so great innovations (to repeal old laws, to cancel settled obligations, to abolish ancient customs; to enact new laws and rules, exacting obedience to them from all men) should not be able to exhibit its warrant, and show its derivation from heaven: well might such peremptory assertions and so confident pretences, without confirmations answerable in weight, beget even in wise men distrust and aversation. The reasonableness and excellency of his doctrine, the innocence and sanctity of his life, the wisdom and persuasiveness of his discourse would not, if nothing more divine should attend them, be thoroughly able to procure faith and submission; they would at best have made his precepts to pass for the devices of a wise man, or the dictates of a good philosopher. They were therefore no unreasonable desires or demands (if they had proceeded from a good meaning, and had been joined with a docile and tractable disposition) which the Jews did make to our Lord; 'Master, we would see a sign from thee; what sign therefore dost thou do, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? what sign dost thou show to us, that thou doest these things?' that is, how dost thou prove thy doctrine credible, or thy authority valid, by God's testimony and warrant? This challenge our Lord himself acknowleged somewhat

reasonable; for he not only asserts the truth of his doctrine and validity of his commission by divine attestation, (in words and works,) nor only exhorts them to credit him on that account, but he also plainly signifies that his bare affirmation did not require credit, and that if he could produce no better proof, they were excusable for disbelieving him: 'If,' saith he, 'I witness of myself, my witness is not true;' not true, that is, not credible; or not so true, as to oblige to belief: and, 'If I do not the works of my Father, (that is, works only imputable to God's extraordinary power,) believe me not;' that is, I require no belief from you: yea, he farther adds, 'If I had not done the works among them, which no man else had done, they (the incredulous people then) had not had any sin;' that is, had not been culpable for unbelief. It was then from the nature of the Messias's office and undertaking very necessary that he should have attestations of this kind; and our Lord himself, we see, declines not, but aggravateth his pretences with this necessity.

2. The effects which the Messias was to produce did require extraordinary attestations and assistances from God. He was to achieve exploits of the greatest difficulty conceivable; far surpassing all that ever was by any person undertaken in the world before: he was to vanquish all the powers, and to confound all the policies of hell; he was to subdue and subjugate all the world; to make the greatest princes to stoop, and to submit their sceptres to his will; to bring down the most haughty conceits, and to break down the most stubborn spirits, and to tame the wildest passions of men; he was to expel from their minds most deeply rooted prejudices, to banish from their practice most inveterate customs, to cross their most violent humors, to thwart their interests, to bear down their ambitions, to restrain their covetous desires and their voluptuous appetites; he was to persuade a doctrine, and to impose a law, very opposite to the natural inclinations, to the current notions, to the worldly advantages, the liberties, emoluments, and enjoyments of all, or of most, or of many people; he was, in short, so to reform the world, as in a manner quite to alter the whole frame of it, and all the course of affairs therein; things which surely it were a madness to enterprise, and an impossibility to accom-

plish, without remarkable testimonies of the divine presence, especial aids of the divine power, and large influences of the divine Spirit, communicated to him; without, as St. Peter phraseth it, 'God were with him;' these things were not effectible by means natural and ordinary, by human wit or eloquence; by good behavior or example, by the bare reason or plausibility of doctrine, by the wise conduct or industrious management of the design; no, such means have by many experiments appeared insufficient to bring about much lesser matters; nothing under the wisdom of God directing, the power of God assisting, the authority of God establishing and gracing his endeavors in an eminent and evident manner, could enable the Messias to bring these mighty things to pass.

3. We may farther consider that 'the Christ' was designed to present himself first to the Jews, (in the first place imparting the declarations of God's will and gracious intentions to them, his ancient friends and favorites;) that is, to a people wholly addicted to this sort of proof, and uncapable of conviction by any other: they did not, as did 'the Greeks, seek wisdom,' but 'required a sign,' as St. Paul observed of them; they were not so apt to inquire after the intrinsic reasons of things, as to expect testimonies from heaven; nothing else was able to persuade them; so our Lord expressly saith; 'Jesus said unto them, If you do not see signs and prodigies, you will nowise believe:' in consequence of which disposition in them, we see by passages in the New Testament that they expected and believed the Messias should come with such attestations and performances; so their importunate demanding of signs on all occasions from our Lord doth signify, and so those words in St. John do imply; 'And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these, which this man doeth?' where we may observe both their expectation of miraculous works from the Messias, and the efficacy which such works had on them. The condition also of the Gentiles, unto whom his design in the next place did extend, seemed to require the same proceedings: for all other methods of instruction and persuasion had before often been applied to them by philosophers and by politicians, for instilling their notions and recommending their laws; they

had been so inured to subtile argumentations and plausible discourses, that the bare use of them was not likely to have any extraordinary effect on them: if the Messias therefore should bring no other confirmation with him unto them, he would seem to deserve no higher regard or credit than other doctors or lawgivers, which had appeared among them; and as easily would he be declined, and put off by them: whence reasonably it may be supposed that for accommodation to the genius and the capacities of those on whose hearts he was to make impression, the Messias should come furnished with such special testimonials and powers from God. Especially considering that,

4. It was agreeable to God's usual method of proceeding in cases resembling this, although much unequal thereto in weight and consequence. There was never any more than ordinary discovery made to men by God, never any very considerable business managed by divine providence, never hardly any eminent person appeared with a pretence of coming from God for the prosecution of such purposes, without God's visible interposal and abetment. This hath always been the authentic seal, whereby he hath wonted to authorise the messengers sent from himself for transacting affairs of an unusual and very weighty nature; whereby his true ambassadors have been distinguishable from ordinary persons, or from deceitful pretenders, who have offered to impose their own devices on men: to a person bringing with him this sort of assurance (except when his tale is evidently false and vain, or his design notoriously wicked and mischievous) God hath always required that a ready credence and obedience should be yielded; taking it for a high affront to himself (no less, as St. John says, than 'giving him the lie') to disbelieve such a person, and for a heinous contumacy to disobey him: that it hath been God's ordinary method, the course of divine history shows. When God separated the patriarchs for the preservation and propagation of his true religion, he manifested an especial presence with them, frequently appearing to them, visibly assisting and blessing them in a more than ordinary manner, enduing them with a prophetical discretion and foresight of things: when he would rescue the seed of those his friends from cruel oppression and hard slavery, (de-

signing also by them to maintain and convey down the sincere way of piety,) he imparted also unto Moses, the especial instrument of those purposes, a power of doing wonders, thereby procuring authority to his person, and credit to his pretences. Moses did well perceive, and judge, that had he come without such attestation he should not have been received or regarded: 'But, behold,' said he, 'they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee:' wherefore God furnished him with such a power of doing such things as should assure the truth of his message; the effect whereof is thus expressed; 'Israel saw that great work, which the Lord did on the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses:' to the promulgation of the law, and establishment of that particular covenant with the Israelites, God did also exhibit significations of his presence in a most evident and affecting manner: 'Lo,' said God to Moses, expressing that matter and its design, 'I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.' And in the whole conduct of that people toward Canaan, God for those ends vouchsafed by Moses to perform very great and prodigious things; which we may see reckoned up in the 78th and 105th Psalms, and in the 9th of Nehemiah. So also when God employed Elias to sustain the remainders of decayed piety in Israel against the countenance of power given to wickedness, and against the stream of popular use, he endued him with a liberal measure of his Spirit, and a power of doing great miracles: the like may be observed of all the prophets, judges, and princes, who on special occasions were raised to perform considerable services for the glory of God and the good of his people. This therefore being God's constant practice, it cannot but be well supposed that in this case he would not withhold his attestation, but would afford it in a most plentiful measure to that person who was in dignity so far to excel all other his envoys and agents; whose undertaking should in importance so vastly transcend all others, that ever were set on foot in the world; to him, who was to free, not one small people only, but all mankind, not from a temporal slavery in Egypt, but from eternal misery in hell; to promulge,

not a pedagogy of ritual observances, but a law of spiritual righteousness; to establish, not a temporal covenant for a little spot of earth, but an everlasting testament for all the world, importing endless beatitude in heaven. God therefore surely would not balk his road on such an occasion, nor refuse his especial testimonials to so great a personage, and to so good a design.

5. If we consider the general reasons assignable why God hath been wont to proceed in this manner, or why he should use it on any occasion, they are with strongest force applicable to this case. The most general reasons why God doth ever interpose extraordinarily, or produce works supernatural, are, to assert palpably his own divinity and providence; strongly to encourage devotion and piety in men: for he by suspending or thwarting the course of nature plainly declareth himself the maker and master thereof; that he freely made the world, and freely doth uphold it; that he hath not tied his own hands, nor confined his power within limits; but is superior to and free from all laws, excepting those of indefectible holiness and goodness; and consequently that all things do not proceed in a track of dead fatality. He thereby also assureth us that he hath an especial regard unto and a care over men, and wisely ordereth human affairs by his providence, frequently (as wisdom directeth and occasion requireth) interposing his hand for the succor, encouragement, and reward of good men; that therefore it is not vain to hope and trust in him; that prayers and devotions are available to procure good from him; that repentance and obedience are no less profitable for us than acceptable to him; that also he freely and justly dispenseth recompenses suitable to men's actions voluntarily performed; that in fine there is a foundation of religion, and a ground of justice between God and man: these things are most evidently and effectually demonstrated by extraordinary attestations; and when therefore could they more seasonably be used, than when God by the Messias intended to call all the world to the acknowlegement and obedience of himself, to the practice of all piety and goodness, with assurances of fit reward, in regard to such practice? If farther to excite men's attention and regard, to breed awe and reverence in men's minds, to confound the

impudence, and to bend or break the obstinacy of men, are main ends and proper effects of such testimonies; whether we consider the Messias's person, the nature of his undertaking, or the persons with whom he was to deal, it is plain (as we have showed) that his business would best deserve and most need them: no dispensation could better deserve them for worth and consequence; none could more need them for greatness and difficulty.

Such reasons may be assigned for the necessity and usefulness of divine attestations in this case: but in opposition to these discourses, and in derogation to this way of confirming any truth or authority, it may be said that no such testifications can well serve to such purposes; for that the like have been and may be applied to the persuasion of error and impiety by false prophets and antichrists, by magicians and wizards; who not only have cunningly counterfeited, but really executed very prodigious and wondrous things, in a manner unaccountable to human philosophy. Since also there are wicked spirits, in subtilty and power far exceeding us, who are able easily to divert the natural course of things; and the limits of whose power in working so it is hard for us to discern or define; how can we be assured that what is done in this kind doth not proceed from them, but from a virtue divine? how can it be a certain and convincing argument of truth? may we not here object that of Tertullian, saying, that 'our Lord pronouncing that many impostors should come, and do miracles, showed thereby the faith grounded on miracles to be temerarious.'*

To this suggestion we may in general return, that seeing the doing such things is the chief and most effectual way whereby God, beyond the resistance of doubt or dispute, can in some cases assure us concerning his mind and will, (whereby he can bestow honor and credit to any instrument employed by him, to any revelation proceeding from him,) it cannot but (notwithstanding that cross instance) reasonably be supposed that God however doth reserve the power thereof in some eminent and discernible manner peculiar to himself, for the promoting his own service. That also at least God being the author and esta-

* Tert. in Marc. iii. 2.

blisher of nature, and the continual sustainer of it by his free providence, it is not likely that he will suffer the laws and course thereof to be much violated, except on occasions very considerable, and for very good purposes; no inferior cause being able to determine his voluntary influence or providential concourse to the accomplishment of designs contrary to his will and purpose. That also the natural goodness and justice of God, the constant care and providence he exerciseth over this world, the particular relations he beareth toward mankind, (as the Maker and Father, the Lord and Governor thereof,) the honor and interest of truth, of religion, of virtue, (whose protector and patron he is, and declareth himself,) the necessary regard he also, in connexion with the rest, doth bear to his own honor and glory, do all conspire to persuade that God will never endure such things to be performed in any high manner, so that good and well meaning people shall be very liable to be thereby extremely seduced into error; or that himself shall be intolerably mocked by the enemies of his glory and our good. This may serve to render it probable that the objection is capable of a solution.

But to answer more distinctly and particularly; we do grant that God sometimes for special reasons (for wise probation of some persons, and just punishment of others; for to approve some men's sincerity and constancy, to detect other men's naughtiness and vanity) may permit such things (in some manner, in some degree such) to be effected by the influence of wicked spirits, or the fraud of wicked men; yet then it will never be very hard for moderately wise and well-disposed persons to distinguish such feats from those acts which issue from the positive and direct efficacy of God, for authorising his messengers and confirming his truth: we may usually discern them to come from bad causes by their nature; we may certainly detect them by their design and influence.

There are some things so great that it is not reasonable to conceive that any such inferior power is able to do them; or if they were able, that God should permit their power actually to be exerted, and to succeed in doing them: such is the making any general or grand alteration in the course of nature; which being God's great work and establishment, the which he doth,

as the prophets speak, govern by a standing law, and preserve according to a perpetual decree, which cannot pass; yea according to a covenant, which his faithfulness is in a manner engaged to observe; it is not probable that he will suffer any creature to disturb or disorder: this experience well confirmeth; for had bad spirits a power of crossing nature so, such is their malice and proneness to do mischief, that the world would soon have been turned by them into confusion and ruin; that all things therein go in so kindly and steady a course, is an argument of their small power and influence on things; that God holdeth the reins fast in his own hands, reserving to himself only as Lord paramount of nature a power to dispense with any of its main laws; that it is 'he alone, who,' as the psalmist saith, 'doeth great wonders.' There are also some things, which, although not of so great and general consequence, are yet of so difficult performance, that it is improbable any creature should affect them; such was the turning of dust into lice, which the devils could not enable the Egyptian sorcerers to perform; to prepare or dispose so much dust for the reception of souls, and to furnish so many souls for the dust, did, it seems, exceed their ability; whence they were forced to confess of that miracle done by Moses, 'This is the finger of God.'

There are also things so good and so beneficial to mankind, that evil spirits may be deemed unable to do them, (God, the fountain of good, retaining them as instruments of his glory, and arguments of his goodness, to his own dispensation,) which also we may presume they would not be willing, were they able, to perform, it being against their disposition or their interest to do it; such are, to dispossess devils, (that is, to divide and weaken their own kingdom;) to discover moral truths of consequence, (that is, to drive men from themselves;) and even to free men from grievous diseases, (that is, to starve their own *ἐπιχαιρεκακία*, and malignity;) as is implied in that passage of the gospel, where it is said, 'These are not the words of him that hath a devil: Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?' Extraordinary works then, if they are very great, very hard, very good, do thence indicate their cause to be divine: wicked spirits deal only in petty, low, and useless prestigiatory tricks, of small consequence and no benefit.

But there are farther some things infallibly signifying a divine virtue, peculiar to God, and (either by their nature or from the decree of God) incommunicable to any creature, otherwise than as acted by God, or immediately depending on him: such are, the knowlege of future contingent events declared by predicting or presignifying them, according to that of the prophet; 'Show,' said he, in way of challenge and conviction to the objects of heathen worship, 'the things to come, that we may know ye are gods:' such is the discerning men's secret thoughts and intentions, the which God assumeth as proper to himself: 'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins;' so that καρδιογνώστης is a characteristical attribute or title proper to him. Such is the restitution of men from a state of death to life; a work not only in itself most difficult, in respect to the ordinary rule of nature which it transgresseth, but impossible to any mere creature without God's aid; for that the souls of men when they die return into God's hand, and enter into a state determined by his high sentence; whence no creature can fetch them down, or raise them up; most impossible also because God by especial decree hath reserved the power of doing it appropriate to himself; the power of life and death being his prerogative, who saith, 'I am he, and there is no God beside me; I kill, and I make alive:' of whom again it is said, 'The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.' He it is that in his hand doth 'hold the keys of hell and of death.' The performing things also by mere word and will, without application of other force, or any preparation of the subject matter, (being equivalent to the work of creation,) is peculiar unto God, the author of all being, or to such as act by the immediate help of his infinite power.

We may add that there also seem to be some things, which infernal spirits (who continue under restraint and command, within a great awe and dread of their Judge,) dare not so much as pretend to or counterfeit; knowing that as presently they shall be checked in their attempt, so they shall be grievously chastised for their presumptions; such may be the assuming to themselves the special names of God, the directly withstanding the extraordinary messengers of God, and the like.

So even considering the very nature of strange works may enable us to distinguish them; but the end and design of such works, together with the influences and effects of them, will farther ascertain us of their original: if they are done to abet any gross error, or to promote any mischievous purpose; if they manifestly do seduce to apostasy from God or goodness; if they naturally tend to the production of impiety, iniquity, or impurity; if they do necessarily produce any great disorder or disturbance in the world, assuredly hell is the source of them; they derive from him whose kingdom and interest they advance; by their fruits we may know the tree from which they grow. If also they discover ostentation and vanity in the actors, or serve only to gratify idle humor and curiosity in the spectators of them, tending otherwise to no good purpose; it is easy to collect whence they spring; that they come from the father both of mischiefs and vanities, who not only delights to abuse us with villanies, but to amuse us also with trifles and fond superstitions.

'As,' saith Origen, 'the power of those enchantments in Egypt was not, in itself, like to that admirable power by God's grace vouchsafed to Moses; so the end did convince those Egyptian feats to be jugglings, those of Moses to be divine.'* The portentous things done 'by the energy of Satan' are, as St. Paul calleth them, *τέρατα ψεύδους*, either false prodigies, or prodigies abetting falsehood and vanity.

But the works of the most wise and good God, as they are commonly works of wonderful majesty and grandeur, incomparable and inimitable for difficulty; so they always are holy, always useful; they ever aim at good ends, and produce wholesome fruits: hence we may discern them, and hence we are obliged to acknowlege them; they afford us ground to say with the psalmist; 'Unto thee, O Lord, we do give thanks; for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.' Such works, as they can only be effects of God's power, so they are arguments of his truth; for that he cannot lend his hand, for that he will not prostitute his assistance to the maintenance of any thing, which is not perfectly true and good; he will

* Orig. in Cels. 2.

'not so tempt any man' into error. 'If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then indeed is the kingdom of God come unto you,' (that is, if I perform works by the divine power, then assuredly is my doctrine true,) was an irrefragable argument.

We may also observe that those wicked spirits are themselves apprehensive how easily their feats are distinguished from the works of God; for hence, it seems, they chose to utter them clancularly, in obscure corners, in blind times, among barbarous and silly people; judging that persons of any wisdom or goodness will be soon able to detect them, and ready to explode them: a little light dazzles the powers of darkness, and scares away these spectres; a little goodness mates their force, enfeebleth and dishearteneth them.

We may also add that the Messias's works by a peculiar character should be manifestly distinguishable from such as proceeded from infernal powers; for that it should be his business to impugn, defeat, and overthrow the Devil's kingdom; all the falsehoods and superstitions, all the immoralities and impieties, which it consisted in, or which supported it: to this end all his doctrine, practice, and performances would conspiringly tend, that 'Satan like lightning should be thrown down from heaven;' which most evidently would evince that what he should do should only come from heaven.

Having thus showed reasons why, and signified to what purposes, the Messias was to receive special testimonies from God; let us now survey those, which were indeed by him exhibited to Jesus our Lord. There is indeed no kind or degree of attestation needful or proper, which hath not been largely from heaven afforded to him. God (so our Lord argueth) is in his own nature invisible and indiscernible to any sense of ours; neither could we endure the lustre of his immediate presence. ('No man ever saw God, or can see him; there shall no man see him and live.') It must be therefore by mediation of signs and works supernatural; the causing of which can only be imputed to him, as beyond the power of any creature to effect or counterfeit; that he can assuredly signify his mind unto us; such only in approbation of any person, law, or doctrine, can be expected from him; and such, in divers

kinds and in great measures, God hath, we say, 'furnished for the authorising Jesus.'

1. God did attest to him long before his coming into the world, by presignifying and predicting concerning him, at several times, in several ways, by several persons, (even by all the prophets and eminent persons among his people of old,) many things, even all things considerable about him; in exact congruity to the circumstances of his coming into the world, (the time when, the place where, the family whence, the manner how, the condition in which he was born,) to the qualities of his person, to the doctrine and law which he published, to all his undertakings and performances and sufferings, and to the successes consequent on what he did. (This is a matter of very large consideration; which otherwhile we have insisted largely on, and therefore shall now waive enlargement on it.)

2. God did in attestation to him immediately send before his face, as his herald and harbinger, a prophet, or one for his admirable wisdom and sanctity of life somewhat 'more than a prophet;' who indeed without doing any miracle, by the prodigious integrity and strictness of his life, by the wonderful efficacy of his doctrine and discourse, procured unto himself a reputation equalling or exceeding that of any former prophet; (whom even Josephus, an indifferent historian, reporteth a man of singular goodness and great authority,) to predispose the minds of men to receive him; by converting men to a serious reflection on their lives and amendment of their manners, to prepare his way; as also to point him out, to foretell of him as presently coming, to testify of him as being come. This was he, to whom it well agreed, and who plainly did assume to himself that which was written by Malachi; 'Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee;' of whom Isaiah (John himself being the avoucher and interpreter) said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;' who was, as Malachi did again signify, 'to come in the spirit and power of Elias, to convert the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' This most extraordinary

and excellent person did at several times and occasions attest unto Jesus, not only that he was incomparably, for the dignity of his person and worth of his performances, to be preferred before himself, and consequently before all other prophets, but that he was the very Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: 'they sent to John,' saith the text, 'and he bare witness of the truth.' God by him also foretold divers things concerning our Lord, which did really come to pass; as those words, uttered occasionally by many persons, do imply; 'John indeed did no miracle; but all things which John spake of this man were true.'

3. God attested unto our Lord by visible apparitions from heaven, at several times, in fit seasons, made in the sight and presence of very good witnesses: angels appearing warned his good father and blessed mother concerning the time and manner of his coming into the world; angels again appearing uttered tidings of his birth, joined with acclamations of praise to God, and gratulations of joy to men; angels were vigilant for his safety, ministered unto him in his temptations and needs, assisted and comforted him in the agonies of his passion, waited on him at his resurrection; an extraordinary star (like that of the morning before the sun) officiously did usher him into the world; at his baptism the Holy Ghost (in the symbolical figure of a dove) appeared descending and resting on him, in the presence of St. John the Baptist, (that most just and holy person, so taken and acknowledged by all men, even by his enemies and murderers; and a most competent witness, as who dared with utmost peril before the greatest persons to assert the truth;) 'He testified thereof, and said, I saw the Spirit of God descending from heaven as a dove, and resting on him.' Moses and Elias also (those most eminent instruments of God, and illustrious representatives of the Messias) did from heaven in a most glorious and splendid manner attend on him, in the presence of three most credible witnesses, Peter, James, and John, the Apostles; one of whom doth himself thus, with the due confidence of an eye-witness, report the fact; 'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but

were spectators of his majesty—being with him in the holy mountain.'

4. God also by vocal attestation did expressly at several times own and approve Jesus: at his baptism, in the audience of St. John the Baptist and others present there; when, 'Behold there was a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:' the like heavenly voice was heard at the transfiguration; 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him:' so the gospels report it; and thus St. Peter himself, a more immediate witness and attendant there; 'He received from God the Father honor and glory, a voice being brought unto him from the magnificent glory; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, being with him in the holy mount.' Again, a little before his death, in presence of a multitude, on Jesus's prayer, that God would by him glorify his name, an audible return was made from heaven; 'There came,' saith the text, 'a voice from heaven,' saying, 'I have both glorified it, and will again glorify it.'

5. God attested to our Lord in that he was endued with a power constantly resident in him of performing miraculous works, for nature and quality such, as could only proceed from a most divine power; not only thwarting the course of nature, but transcending the strength of any creature, and especially contrary to what any evil creature could or would perform: this was a testimony beyond any human testimony, and which our Lord insisted on as such; 'I,' saith he, 'have a greater testimony than that of John; for the works which the Father hath granted me, that I should perform them, those very works which I do, they testify about me, that the Father hath sent me.'

Works indeed he performed of a stupendous greatness and difficulty; all the creatures (the most unruly and boisterous, the most malignant and rebellious) beside their natures, and against their wills, did obey his commands: in a tempest 'he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there became a great calm: so that men did marvel, saying, What manner of man is this, for even the winds and the sea obey him!' the sea

stood firm for him and St. Peter to walk on; he turned water into good wine; he unconceivably so improved a few loaves and little fishes as to feed and satisfy multitudes, leaving more behind than there were at first; he cured the most incurable diseases, inveterate palsies, fluxes of blood, and leprosies; he restored senses, and limbs wanting from the birth, or for a long time; innumerable persons, blind, deaf, dumb, lame, and maimed, he restored to the use of their faculties, and members respectively, without any medicinal applications, or any natural means conducible to those purposes: he restored lunatic persons to their right wits, and dispossessed evil spirits, they not daring to disobey him, and acknowleging his uncontrollable authority; 'They were,' saith the text, 'amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.' These were indeed works of excessive grandeur and difficulty; but he did others far more great and hard; and these were greater for the manner of performing them, than in their own nature: he did other acts so great, that they were only to be done by an infinite power; and most of these he performed in a manner which argued omnipotency present with the doer.

Works proper unto God he did many; such was discerning the thoughts, reasonings, opinions, and purposes of men, however concealed or disguised, whereof we have many instances; and his intimate acquaintance, St. John, testifies of him generally, saying, 'He needed not that any should witness about a man, for he knew himself what was in man.' Such was also to forgive sins, (a privilege only belonging to the supreme Lord and Lawgiver, against whom sin is committed;) the which he assumed to himself, and irreprovably maintained it by exerting a power equivalent thereto; 'For whether,' said he, 'is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? but that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house: and he arose, and departed to his house:' such it was likewise to foretell future contingencies; this he often did; as concerning his own passion and resurrection, with all the circumstances of

them; particularly the treason of Judas; ('He knew,' saith St. John, 'from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him;') concerning St. Peter's lapse, repentance, and suffering; concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and utter demolishment of the temple; concerning the persecutions which his disciples should undergo; concerning the communication of the Holy Ghost after his decease, and the propagation of the gospel in the world: such was the foundation of the Church on a rock, against which 'the gates of hell should not prevail:' such again it was to raise the dead, which he often performed; he raised the ruler's daughter, and the widow's son of Naim, and his friend Lazarus; and, 'The dead are raised,' is reckoned among the ordinary miracles done by him, in the answer to St. John the Baptist's disciples: these were acts of divine power, which no creature, unassisted by God, could perform.

And considering the manner of performance such were both these and most of the rest; they in that respect emulating God's inimitable work of creation, and in a manner seeming to exceed it; for that it seemeth harder to produce things out of matter indisposed and repugnant, than to bring them out of mere nothing: as God by mere word and will created things, when 'he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;' so did Jesus in like manner, by the efficacy of his command, or by actions equipollent thereto, without predisposing the subjacent matter, or using any natural instrument, accomplish his great and strange works; 'He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still;' so he quelled the storm: 'I will, be thou cleansed;' so he cured the leper: 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise;' so he revived the widow's son: 'O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou desirest;' so he cured the Canaanitish woman's possessed daughter: 'He cried out Lazarus, come forth;' καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ τεθνηκὼς, so the dead man heard his voice, and presently came forth out of the grave: he said, 'Ephphatha, Be opened,' to the deaf man's ears; they immediately heard, and obeyed: he said but one word, 'Ἀνάβλεψον, 'See again,' to the blind man; καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀνέβλεψε, 'and without more ado he saw again:' he did but chide the great fever, with which St. Peter's mother-in-law was troubled, and it left her: he did but take the ruler's daughter by the

hand, and 'the girl revived, and rose up:' he only touched the two blind men's eyes, and so 'their sight was restored:' the woman, who had a flux of blood for twelve years, did but touch him, καὶ ἁθη παραχρῆμα, and she thereon *ipso facto* instantly was healed: yea multitudes of sick persons together did only endeavor to 'touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched it were healed:' 'there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.' When he used any thing like means, he, as St. Chrysostom observeth, proceeded in ways not only preternatural, but contrary to nature; as when he cured the blind man in St. John's Gospel, anointing his eyes with clay and spittle: διὰ πράγματος ἐπιτείνοντος τὴν πήρωσιν, ἀνεῖλε· 'by a thing apt to increase (or strengthen) blindness, he took it away.' So great in nature, so high for manner of performance, were the works of our Lord; they plainly were either the works, or they were done in the way of omnipotency.

They had also no less of goodness than of greatness divine; they were all of them plainly works of piety or works of charity and pity; of a holy nature and beneficial use; they were generally performed on evidently reasonable occasions or needs; for the succor and comfort of persons in some want or distress; or for instruction of the minds and reformation of the manners of men; for healing the sick, feeding the hungry, easing the afflicted, restoring men to their senses, freeing them from the devil's tyranny; for helping men in disappointment and need, or for encouraging kindness and good neighborhood among people, (to which purpose his first miracle done at Cana served;) for instilling or impressing some wholesome truth, as when the fig-tree withered at his command; for encouraging dutiful submission to governors, as when the fish was brought up with a piece of money in his mouth, furnishing him and St. Peter to pay tribute: in fine, the nature and importance of his works St. Peter thus well expressed, saying of him; Ὃς διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν, 'Who went about doing good, (or benefiting men,) and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with him:' and the Evangelist thus; 'Jesus went about all the cities, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.'

Considering which things, we may well discern by what power and to what purpose Jesus did perform his admirable works; and may repel from our hearts all the cavils or calumnies forged by malicious and vain wits (such as those of Celsus and Julian) in derogation to them; we may particularly perceive how impudently false that suggestion was of the apostate emperor; who said that Jesus, 'while he lived, did nothing worthy hearing, except one suppose to heal cripples and blind folk, and to exorcise demoniacs in the villages Bethsaida and Bethany, to be great works:'* in opposition to which kind of suggestions, and for abundant confirmation of our purpose, we may consider some advantageous circumstances and concomitances of our Lord's performances.

They were, we may observe, not some few things done at one time or in one place, among friends and partisans; but innumerably many and frequent, (a world of things, more than well could be recited, as St. John telleth us,) done through a long course of time, (for some years together,) in several places, before all sorts of people, many of them very ill-affected towards him. They were not done clancularly in a blind corner, among rude and simple people; but openly and visibly every where about Judea, the most lightsome place for knowlege and goodness in the world; where the best worship of God most flourished, and all diabolical impostures were most detested, in the places there most public and conspicuous; so he could affirm and admonish them; 'I spake freely to the world; I always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews from all places resort; and in secret have I done nothing:' they were done so apparently, that the people generally saw them, and acknowleged them; that scarce any man could be ignorant of them; that the most learned and considerate men took it for granted that they were done; that adversaries could not deny the performance of them, although out of envy and ill-will they were ready to impute it to the worst causes devisable; that many of all sorts were convinced, and divers converted by them: as for the people, 'Great multitudes,' saith St. Matthew, one present, and a follower of our Lord, 'came

* Cyr. adv. Jul. lib. 6.

unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus's feet, and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel:' and, 'The people marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel; but the pharisees said, He casteth out devils by the prince of the devils:' the matter of fact they could not offer, against conviction of sense, to question; but malice prompted perversely and foolishly to assign a bad cause thereof: the matter was so notorious that St. Peter could thus confidently appeal to the whole nation: 'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved (or demonstrated) unto you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you; as you yourselves know.' The adversaries (such whom superstitious prejudices, obstinate humors, or corrupt affections, envy, pride, ambition, avarice, or the like, had made adversaries to him) did not only see the thing, but were affrighted with its consequence; 'The chief priests,' it is said, 'and the pharisees gathered a counsel together, and said, What shall we do, for this man doeth many wonders? if we let him alone, all men will believe on him:' yea indeed, notwithstanding all this watchful caution and fine policy of theirs, notwithstanding all the opposition and discouragement they could interpose, all their strugglings to smother his credit and doctrine, many were in their hearts convinced, even divers of such as were unwilling to believe, and ashamed or afraid to avow their persuasion; 'Also,' it is said again, 'of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:' Nicodemus, an honest and ingenious person, a man of honor, (but somewhat wary and timorous,) came secretly, and in the name (it seemeth) of many persons, alike disposed with himself, thus spake: 'Rabbi, we know that thou hast come a teacher from God; for no man can do those things which thou doest, except God be with him.' As for the generality of the people, (the most unconcerned in such cases as to point of honor and interest, and thence the most impartial and sincere party,) they following their senses were greatly affected and

astonished with what he did; taking him for a very extraordinary person; some in a gross and confused manner, others in a more distinct way of belief; 'Some said he was John the Baptist; others, that he was Elias; others, Jeremiah, or one of the ancient prophets risen up again: but many of the people (more fully and exactly) believed on him, saying, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?'

We may also observe that Jesus did not affect to perform wonders out of vanity, or to humor men's curiosity, but always on inducements of piety and charity: most of them were performed occasionally at the desire of men, suggested by their needs; and all of them for their edification or comfort; that he therefore did not seek by them to acquire reputation or applause to himself; nor by them designed to advance any private interest of his own, but singly aimed at the promotion of God's glory in them all: that in effect no secular advantage of dignity, or wealth, or pleasure did from them accrue to himself; but rather disgrace and obloquy, hatred and enmity, trouble and pain, did from them befal him; all the glory of them purely coming to God, and all the benefit to men. As he charged his disciples, so he practised himself, doing all gratis, and freely, without expecting or accepting any requital. He often studiously concealed his miracles, forbidding those who were concerned in them, or conscious of them, to publish them; so striving to decline or to stifle the honor naturally emergent from them. When it was necessary or expedient they should appear, he disclaimed being the principal author of them, referring and ascribing them to God: 'I can,' said he, 'do nothing of myself;' and, 'The word that I speak to you I speak not of myself; but the Father who abides in me, he doeth the works:' and, 'I seek not mine own glory; I receive not glory of men:' thus he professed, and so he practised: consequently the effect was, that (as it is expressed in the gospels) 'fear,' or a pious reverence, 'did seize all men; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people:' 'All the people seeing it gave praise to God:' 'All men were amazed at the mighty power (or majesty) of God:' 'When the multitude saw it, they

marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.' And doth not so much glory from his performances resulting to God, so good an influence on the hearts of men, evidently show whence the power effecting them was derived? would the Devil be such an instrument of God's praise?

We may also with St. Irenæus* observe that Jesus, in performing his cures and other miraculous works, did never use any profane, silly, fantastic ceremonies; any muttering of barbarous names or insignificant phrases; any invocation of spirits, or inferior powers; any preparatory purgations, any mysterious circumstances of proceeding, apt to amuse people; any such unaccountable methods or instruments, as magicians, enchanters, diviners, circulatorious jugglers, and such emissaries of the Devil, or self-seeking impostors, are wont to use; but did proceed altogether in a most innocent, simple, and grave manner, with a majestic authority and clear sincerity; becoming such an agent of God as he professed himself to be.

That also the whole tenor of his proceedings was directly levelled against the kingdom of darkness; against all the impiety, all the malice, all the filthiness, and all the fallacy thereof; at the casting wicked and impure spirits, not only from the bodies, but out of the souls of men; causing men not only to detest and defy them, but to loathe their qualities, and to eschew their works: this is that binding, disarming, rifling, and dispossessing the strong one, which Jesus alleged as an infallible argument that he was not only no friend, but a mighty enemy to the infernal powers; an enemy, not only in disposition and design quite contrary, but in virtue and force highly superior to them: that we should worship God alone with most hearty reverence and love; that we should bear the same clear good-will to all men as we do to ourselves; that we should be strictly just, veracious, and sincere in our words and dealings, meek and humble in our spirits, pure and sober in all our enjoyments, (things perfectly opposite to the temper and interests of hell,) were things, which as our Lord constantly in his doctrine did inculcate, so he countenanced and furthered them by

* Iren. ii. 58.

his works; from whence assuredly we may collect that they came from heaven, and were intended for the promoting God's service: hell would never contribute so much to its own disgrace and disadvantage, would never so industriously concur to defeat and destroy itself; God plainly reaped the benefit by Jesus's works, he therefore certainly did plant them and bless them.

On thesec onsiderations it appeareth sufficiently that in correspondence to the reason and exigency of the case our Lord did perform innumerable works, which had impressed on them the truest and highest characters of divinity; the most peculiar grandeur, and perfectest goodness; the purest holiness of design, and the beneficial tendency proper to the works issuing from divine power; so that supposing God should send the Messias into the world, or any great ambassador from himself, he could scarce possibly, he should not at least, all things considered, need to furnish him with more convincing attestations, than he hath exhibited to our Lord. Whence we may well apprehend the validity of that argument, which our Lord himself suggested for assurance of St. John the Baptist in his opinion concerning him, or rather for the satisfaction of St. John's disciples; when John sent two of his disciples, with this inquiry, 'Art thou he, or look we for another?' Jesus thus replied; 'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me.'

6. God most signally did attest to our Lord by miraculously raising him from the dead; or in that by a divine power he raised up himself from the grave; which work, for the singular greatness and high consequence thereof, together with the certain evidence that it was really performed, might alone suffice to confirm the verity of all our Lord's pretences; [that he was the true Messias, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Lord of all things, the Judge of all the world;] most efficaciously to evince and persuade the most eminent and important parts of his doctrine, (the immortality of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies, the just and wise providence of God

over men, the dispensation of rewards and punishments hereafter, answerable to men's conversation and practice in this life.) This indeed is the point, which invincibly guardeth and fortifieth all other testimonies; but it is so pregnant of considerations belonging to it, that it deserveth more time and room than we now can yield it; wherefore we choose rather at present to pass it over, than slightly to touch it, reserving it for a peculiar subject of discourse.

7. A farther attestation was given to our Lord by the power of doing miracles in his name imparted to the disciples; who by him were appointed and authorised to prosecute the great design commenced by himself: not only his person, but even his name did great wonders; it cured diseases, it cast out devils, it surmounted nature, and subdued hell: whereby he indeed appears, for especial favor with God, personal excellency, dignity of office, importance of undertaking, incomparably to have surpassed all former prophets and commissioners of God, by whose ministry any law, covenant, or doctrine, hath been conveyed to men; never by delegation or in dependence on any other person, never in any other person's name, were such works done. To the twelve Apostles at their first mission he among other instructions injoined thus; 'Cure the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils; ye have freely received, freely give:' to the seventy disciples, sent out by himself to instil the rudiments of his doctrine, and to admonish people of his approach, he gave this commission and charge; 'In any city into which you enter, heal those which are sick therein; and say unto them, The kingdom of heaven is come near unto you:' he then adds; 'Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy:' the success was, that 'they returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.' At his departure he promised and foretold thus; 'These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover:' all which things were abundantly fulfilled; for a liberal communication of divine power was granted to them,

enabling them to perform the greatest works; so that, as St. Luke telleth us, 'by the hands of the Apostles many wonders and signs were done among the people;' the performance of which was so notorious, that on knowlege, and in confidence thereof, 'there came,' saith the holy historian, 'a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.' The like power also was by the Apostles derived unto others, in such kind and measure, as the carrying on Jesus's great design (the propagation of God's truth and the edification of his church) did require; by succession it was transmitted through several ages, and visibly continued so long, as such extraordinary means were useful or expedient for the conviction and conversion of the world; most of the first fathers of the church do expressly testify concerning remainders thereof in their times: 'It is not possible' (saith St. Irenæus for one instance, among others innumerable) 'to tell the number of the graces (or special gifts) which the church through the whole world receiving from God doth, in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, daily perform for the succor of the nations,' &c. And remarkable is the confidence of Tertullian, reporting the effects of this power in his time: he in his apologetic speech for the Christians even dares to provoke the Ethnic governors to trial, and to lay the issue concerning not only the truth of Christian doctrine, but the lives and safety of its professors thereon; 'Let,' saith he,* 'any person, manifestly possessed with the Devil, or one who is deemed to be wrapt with a divine fury, be set before your tribunals; that spirit, being commanded by a Christian to speak, shall as truly there confess himself to be a devil, as otherwhere a god—If he do not so confess, not daring to lie, even there spill the blood of that procacious Christian:' 'What,' adds he, 'is more manifest than that work? what more faithful than that probation? Stand not to these sayings, if your eyes and ears will suffer you.' The like assertions and challenges might be produced out of divers other Fathers.

* Tert. Apol. 23.

Neither perhaps is the communication of this divine virtue so ceased now, that it would be wanting on any needful occasion; the frequent performance of such works among them in whom faith by abundance of other competent means may be produced and confirmed, unto whom also the first miracles are virtually present by the help of history and good reason, is indeed nowise necessary, nor perhaps would be convenient; but did the same pious zeal for God's honor, and the same charitable earnestness for men's good, excite any persons now to attempt the conversion of infidels to the sincere Christian truth, I see no reason to doubt but that such persons would be enabled to perform whatever miraculous works should conduce to that purpose; for 'the Lord's hand is not shortened,' the grace of Christ is not straitened, the name of Jesus hath not lost its virtue.

8. God did attest to our Lord by accomplishing his prediction and promise, in a plentiful effusion of the divine Spirit on his Church and disciples, for their perfect instruction and guidance, for their support and comfort, for enabling them to convince and convert men to him; 'When' (said our Lord to them before his decease, concerning this attestation) 'the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from my Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:' and 'Tarry ye' (said he again, after his resurrection) 'in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'

Accordingly soon after our Lord's ascension, as the Holy Spirit was conspicuously dispensed, on various occasions, in divers proportions, and in different ways, according to the exigencies of things, for the edification and enlargement of the Church; so especially at Pentecost it was in a most solemn manner and abundant measure poured forth on the whole Church and each member of it; 'For then,' saith St. Luke, 'the disciples (to the number of one hundred and twenty persons) being gathered together—with one accord, in one place;' —'suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,' (which was a most proper emblem of the Holy Spirit's nature and powerful efficacy,) 'and it filled all the house where they were sitting,' (which then typified the Ca-

tholic Church, through which the Holy Spirit was to be diffused, to animate and actuate it;) 'and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,' (denoting the various gifts and graces imparted for expression of God's praise and propagation of his truth, which were to be enlivened by fervent charity, zeal, and devotion,) 'and it sat on each of them;' implying that every faithful Christian constantly should partake of this heavenly benefit, according to his need; 'and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance:' that is, they were perfectly inspired, so that each was endowed with the gift of speaking a language before unknown to him; which was a miracle very great, and most pertinent; to learn a strange tongue requiring much time and great pains; the speaking such tongues being then very serviceable to the promulgation of the gospel: all which event was very public and notorious; for that at that festival-time 'there were,' saith the divine historian, 'dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised about, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language—the wonderful things of God.'

This was therefore a general attestation to our Lord, pregnant and clear as could be, both for conviction of unbelievers and confirmation of the faithful; the which effects it had; so that in virtue thereof, St. Peter having explained the design of it, 'three thousand souls were added to the Church;' and all 'did continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship.'

Besides also it was an illustrious pledge of that inestimable gift, to be perpetually communicated to the Church for its edification, and to each Christian for his direction and assistance in religious practice, according to the evangelical covenant; the which is a standing witness, attesting to our Lord, in the heart and conscience of every good man, according to that of St. Peter; 'And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him:' he indeed keeping his residence and exerting his power in all pious souls; shining into their minds with 'the true

heavenly light,' (that 'pure and perfect wisdom, which is from above;') kindling charity, devotion, comfort, and joy in their hearts; supporting them in trials and temptations; raising their affections and desires above this present transitory world; disposing them to relish spiritual things, and to entertain themselves with the hopes of future blessedness; doth assure them that 'Jesus is the Lord;' doth seal to them the truth of his doctrine, the reality of his promises, the efficacy of his grace, the wonderful greatness of his love and goodness toward them; so that hence that is abundantly verified which St. John telleth us, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.'

There are divers other considerable attestations to our Lord; such as the divine sublimity of his doctrine, discovering itself to enlightened minds to shine from heaven; the testimony of God's Spirit to the hearts and consciences of good and faithful people, assuring them that 'Jesus is the Lord,' and sealing to them the truth of his doctrine; the operation of God's grace in production of moral virtues, or the purgation of heart and amendment of life flowing from faith in him, the efficacy of prayers in his name offered to God; all the joys, and comforts, and happy fruits springing from Christian devotion; the good effects the gospel hath had in reformation of the world inducing many great benefits, and preventing mischiefs therein: but these and the like, being not so public, so distinctly observable, so easily drawn into argument, apt to convince the incredulous, I shall pass over; adding but one more of a more general and conspicuous nature.

9. Lastly, God hath attested unto our Lord by the wonderful success which hath attended his gospel in its conveyance and propagation: its, in so short a time, so generally prevailing in the hearts of men, triumphing over the mightiest oppositions, subduing the world to the faith and obedience of itself, accomplished by means to appearance so insufficient, and by ways so improbable, may seem to reason no less a miracle of Providence against the course of human affairs, than the rest performed by him, or for him, were miracles to sense, above the power of natural causes, both arguing the presence and assistance of omnipotency: the work was a victory over the world and over

hell, achieved by the faith of Jesus; and that a very strange one, whether we consider the combatants who fought for him, or the adversaries against whom, or the weapons by which, or the manner how they strove, or the very cause itself, which they maintained for him.

They were not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, but a very few, mean and poor, unlearned and simple men, whom no outward circumstances commended to human regard, no worldly advantage furthered in pursuance of their design, who had nothing visible to rely on, to hearten, to support them in their endeavors: a few fishermen, publicans, tentmakers, and other persons of like quality, education, improvement, and capacity, were the instruments of this great work; those brave soldiers of Christ, who boldly set themselves in array against all his adversaries: and what adversaries were they? who, but all the majesty and authority, all the force and violence, all the policy and craft, all the wit, learning, wisdom, and eloquence, all the passion and rage of men, all the power, cunning, and malice of the cursed spirits; in short, all the forces and endeavors of earth and hell combined against them. They were to check and control the ambitions, interests, pleasures of mighty emperors and potentates; whose assumed divine honors they decried as vain and wicked; whose commands they reprehended as unjust and impious; to whose power and pleasure they prescribed restraints, declaring them obliged to contain their practice within bounds of piety, equity, and temperance: they were to suppress the credit and the gain of all priests or ministers of religion in the world, whose doctrines they condemned as vain and silly, whose practices they reproved as vile and damnable: they were to confute all the subtilty of philosophers, all the eloquence of orators, all depths of learning, and improvements of reason or wit; impugning the opinions famous and current among men as false, or slighting them as frivolous: they were to overbear and master the prejudices of all people, fortified by natural inclination and temper, by countenance of long tradition and custom; by education, by public laws, and all so mighty enforcements: they were to charge with reproach all ages past, and the ancestors of all people in the world, (those of one small people only in part excepted,) of very

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hought to the obedience of Christ:' in this strange man-
' they maintain their cause:
ause indeed, which of itself did not seem likely to pros-
' the world, having in itself so little of plausibility, and
ng to the embracers thereof so very small encouragement:
' injoined to its followers the worship and imitation of a
n lying under extreme disadvantages in the eye of man;
had lived in a very mean condition, and had suffered a
ignominious death; whom therefore to be obliged to adore
obey could not but to the ordinary sense of men appear
offensive: which again recommended a doctrine little
eful, or rather very cross, to the natural propensions, to the
ent principles, to the secular advantages of men; which in-
ged men in nothing that they were apt to like, but greatly
ed and checked them in the use of their liberties, gratifica-
n of their fancies, and enjoyment of their pleasures; which
ch disparaged all the pleasing goods, and all the flattering
ries of the world; charging men never much to affect or
k them, sometimes utterly to quit and renounce them; freely
oosing in their stead to undertake a cross with all its pains
d disgraces, which propounded it as an essential ingredient
f itself, or a condition necessary for all that should avow it, to
circumcise the heart,' to 'mortify the deeds of the body,' to
crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;' 'to cut off right
hands,' and 'pull out right eyes;' to part with all their for-
tunes, to hate their relations, to sacrifice their lives, if they
were thereto called, for its sake; which rendered men, as it
were, dead to all present fruitions, and unconcerned in all hopes
here; engaging them intirely to place their contents and happi-
ness in a reversion of things invisible and future: they, in fine,
did hold forth a doctrine to the sense of flesh and blood full of
most rigid laws, severe rules, harsh conditions, and hard say-
ings, apt to choke the faith of men, and to obstruct its enter-
tainment with them.

Now that a handful of such persons, against such obstacles,
in ways so preposterous, and different from the course of human
proceedings, were able to render so unlikely a cause so abs-
lutely victorious; so that suddenly all the might, wit, and
quence of men did stoop unto it, and serve under it; that

majesty of the greatest princes gladly veiled thereto, that the prudence of statesmen cordially did approve it, that all the learning of the world yielded itself up captive and tributary thereto, that all superstition vanished before it, and all the force of hell sunk under it; is it not a huge argument that God himself did in favor thereof interpose his omnipotent arm; that to the Lord of hosts ('unto whom,' as king Asa said, 'it is nothing to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power;' to whom it is indifferent 'to save by many or by few') this glorious victory is to be ascribed, who thereby pleased to accomplish his ancient promises, to maintain his holy truth, to further the salvation of his creatures, to promote his own glory, and especially to magnify the name of his only beloved Son Jesus, our ever blessed Lord? 'to whom for ever and ever be all praise.' Amen.

Having thus largely endeavored to show that Jesus our Lord is the Messias, and consequently supposing the truth of the Christian doctrine; let us now briefly recapitulate and explain in what manner and in what respects the New Testament represents him as Christ; how, according to that, Jesus was signally chosen and consecrated by God, in a manner supereminent, to all the offices denoted by the title Christ, (the office prophetical, regal, and sacerdotal,) and how he effectually doth execute them.

Him, saith St. Peter in general, God anointed with the Holy Spirit and power: God anointed him, not with an external affusion of material oil, (as neither were the patriarchs, nor king Cyrus, who are yet called 'the Christs of God;') that was only a ritual and symbolical business; but with a real infusion of divine grace and power, qualifying and enabling him perfectly to execute all those great and extraordinary functions. With this gladsome oil he was thoroughly anointed and replenished above measure: with this he was 'sanctified from the womb;' when the 'power of the Highest did overshadow him' at his conception: with this at his baptism he was solemnly and visibly inaugurated; when 'the heavens were opened' unto him, and 'the Spirit of God descended on him as a dove, and came on him:' with this in all the course of his life and ministry he was continually accompanied; the virtue of it being

discovered and diffused in most sensible effects of wise and gracious discourse, holy and blameless conversation, wonderful and glorious performances, for the honor of God and the benefit of mankind, to the delight and consolation of all well-disposed minds: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth,' saith St. Peter in the Acts, 'with the Holy Ghost; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.' He was by this spiritual unction constituted in right and in effect a Prophet, a King, a Priest.

1. First, a Prophet: for they were not mistaken, who, on his raising the widow's child, were 'amazed, and glorified God, saying, That a great prophet was raised up among them,' and that 'God had visited his people.' Nor they (in St. John's Gospel) who, reflecting on another great miracle, (feeding multitudes with five loaves and two little pickled fishes), brake into this confession; 'This is in truth that Prophet who was to come into the world.'

And the disciples well described him, who styled him, 'a Prophet mighty in word and deed, before God and all the people.' He was so, as having an extraordinary commission from God, declared by vocal attestation of God himself from heaven, by express testimony of St. John the Baptist, ('the person of most remarkable sanctity and greatest authority in his time,') by the performance of innumerable and incomparable signs and works miraculous; (arguments in the highest degree and to the utmost possibility sufficient to assert and confirm it.) He was also in greatest perfection qualified for the exercise of that function, by inspiration complete and unlimited; by disposition of mind altogether pure and holy; (expressed in a continual practice of life void of all sin and guile; by an insuperable courage and constancy, a transcendent wisdom and discretion, an incomparable meekness and patience, a most winning sweetness and goodness, a most powerful awfulness and majesty, shining in all his discourse and demeanor.)

Suitable also to the authority of his commission and the qualifications of his person, were the weight and the extent of the doctrine he in God's name revealed; it concerning no less than the salvation of mankind, and reconciliation of the world to God; the intire will of God, and whole duty of man; with all

the laws and precepts, the covenants and conditions, the promisings and threatenings, relating to our future state. He did not (as other prophets have done) prophesy about the constitution of one particular law, religion, or covenant; about the reproof or reformation of one state, the judgment or fate determined to one nation; but his design reached to the instruction and conversion of all people, in all places, through all times, to the settling of a law and covenant absolutely universal and perpetual: mysteries he brought forth never before revealed, and decrees never to be reversed; to the final doom of all the world did his prophetical denunciations extend. So is he a Prophet. Such he was in his temporal appearance and administrations on earth; and such he continues for ever in heaven; from thence on all occasions by his Holy Spirit imparting to his faithful people all needful instruction in truth, direction in practice, admonition to duty, and comfort in trouble. He is also such by the ministry of his servants, whom he hath appointed, and whom he assists, to instruct and guide us.

2. He is also a king, by many unquestionable titles, of a great and extensive authority, exercising it to the best effects and purposes. He is a king by nature and birth; as the only Son of God, partaker of his eternal power and majesty; for therefore to him it was said, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre:' and as the Son of David; for of him the angel said, 'The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his Father, and he shall reign over the house of David for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' He is also a king by divine designation and appointment. For, 'Let all the house of Israel,' saith St. Peter, 'know assuredly, that God hath made him Lord and Christ;' and, 'The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man' (or as such.) He is also king by merit and purchase; for, 'he for the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honor; he was obedient to death, even the death of the cross; therefore God super-exalted him, and bestowed on him a name above every name.' 'To this end he both died and rose again, that he might lord it over both the dead and living.' He is king also by conquest; having delivered us out of the power of darkness, and freed us from

the vassalage of sin; 'having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly,' and triumphed over them; having 'delivered us from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; that we being delivered from our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' He is also a king by our election and free choice, we having voluntarily put ourselves under his protection, and submitted to his command, and taken on ourselves his yoke, and vowed everlasting fealty to him in our baptism. Such a right he hath of governing.

As for the extent of his kingdom, it is in all respects boundless, both for place and time; it is universal and perpetual. He is the eternal king of all the world: God hath 'so exalted him and given him a name above all names, that to the name of Jesus every knee should bend, whether of things in heaven, or things on earth, or things under the earth.' 'To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb,' by every creature 'in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth,' are jointly to be ascribed 'the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the power, for ever and for ever.' He is constituted ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς, 'above all rule, and authority, and domination, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come:' it is his just title and proper badge, 'The King of kings, and Lord of lords;' to whom all nations are vassals, yea all creatures are subject and tributary. But he in especial manner is king over his church; that peculiar people, whom he hath especially purchased to himself by his merits and blood; whom he hath subdued to his obedience by the sword of his word, and by the prevailing virtue of his Spirit; that mystical Zion, in which it is said that God 'will place his reign and residence for ever;' that 'heavenly city,' whereof all the saints are fellow-citizens, and he the sovereign head and governor; 'God hath,' saith St. Paul, 'put all things under his feet, and hath given him head above all things to the church.' In respect to which both the evangelical dispensation here, and the future state of bliss hereafter, are called the 'kingdom of heaven.' Over this he reigns, enjoying all royal prerogatives, exercising all royal administrations, and dispensing most royal munificences. He hath in this his kingdom esta-

blished most righteous and wholesome laws; the which his subjects are by him obliged and enabled to obey. He constantly defendeth and protecteth his subjects from all invasions and assaults of their enemies, (intestine enemies, their own lusts; external enemies, the devil and the world.) He provides for all their needs and wants; he supports them in all their distresses and troubles. He exercises judgment over them; distributing fit rewards and punishments with exquisite justice and equity; (most liberal rewards to the loyal and obedient; most severe punishments on obstinate offenders and rebels.) He lastly restrains and suppresses, defeats and destroys, all the adversaries to his royal dignity, and to the welfare of his good subjects, both visible and invisible, temporal and spiritual. 'Out of his mouth (as it is in the Apocalypse) there goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.' 'These mine enemies, (he shall one day say,) which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.' 'He must reign,' saith St. Paul, 'till he hath put all enemies under his feet.' Thus is he a king, endued with sovereign right and power, crowned with glorious majesty, enjoying all pre-eminences, and exercising all acts suitable to regal dignity.

3. He is likewise a priest, and that much above an ordinary one; διαφορωτέρας τέτευχε λειτουργίας, 'He hath obtained a more excellent function' (as the Apostle to the Hebrews speaketh) than ever any other priest had. 'Every high priest,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices.' He did, as such, once offer up an oblation, in worth and excellency far surpassing all the sacrifices and oblations that ever were made; (all the fattest hecatombs that ever were sacrificed, all the gold and precious stones that ever were dedicated, all the spices and perfumes that ever were kindled into incense, on altar, were but vile and sordid, were ineffectual and unacceptable, in comparison thereto;) a willing oblation he made on the altar of his cross of himself, (his most innocent, most pure, most spotless and unblemished self,) of his most glorious body, (the temple of the Divinity,) of his most precious blood, of his dear life, 'for the life of the world' and redemption of mankind; for the 'propitiation of our sins and the sins

of the whole world;' an oblation which alone could appease God's wrath, and satisfy his justice, and merit his favor toward us.

He doth also (which is another sacerdotal performance) intercede for us; he intercedes as an advocate for the pardon of our sins; ('If any man sin, we have an advocate with (or to) the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.') He intercedes for the acceptance of our services, (whence we are enjoined to do all things, to pray, to give thanks in his name;) for the granting our requests; for grace and assistance; for comfort and reward; for all spiritual blessings and advantages to be conferred on us; he thus pursuing the work of salvation by his propitiatory sacrifice begun for us; whence, as the Apostle to the Hebrews saith, 'he is able to save to the uttermost those that by him come to God, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.'

He doth also perform the priestly function of blessing. Blessing the people in God's name, and blessing God in the people's behalf; as did that illustrious type of his, Melchizedek; ('Blessed,' said he, 'be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.') So hath Jesus effectually pronounced all joy and happiness to his faithful people; he pronounced blessedness to them in his sermons; he blessed his disciples at his parting; 'Lifting up his hands, he blessed them,' saith St. Luke; 'God in him,' saith St. Paul, 'hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,' (or 'in heavenly things;') and, 'God,' saith St. Peter, 'having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless us in turning every one of us from his iniquity:' and at the last day he will utter that comfortable benediction; 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' So is Jesus a true and perfect priest. And,

So, finally, in all respects, is Jesus God's anointed, and the Christ of God; as the great Prophet and Doctor; as the Sovereign King and Prince; as the High-priest and Advocate of his church. And indeed that he is so is the fundamental point of our religion; which the Apostles did peculiarly testify,

preach, and persuade; the sincere belief of which doth constitute and denominate us Christians.

IV. The consideration whereof ought to beget in us a practice answerable to the relations between him and us, grounded thereon.

If Jesus be such a prophet, we must, with careful attention, and a docile mind, hearken to his admonitions and instructions; we must yield a steady belief to all his doctrine, and we must adhere constantly thereto, and we must readily obey and practise what he teaches.

If he be a king, we must maintain our due allegiance to him, pay him honor and reverence, submit to his laws and commandments, repose trust and confidence in him, fly to his protection and assistance in all our difficulties and needs.

If he be a priest, we must with sincere faith and hope apply ourselves unto him for, and rely on, his spiritual ministries in our behalf; sue for and expect propitiation of our sins by virtue of his sacrifice; the collation of all spiritual gifts from his intercession; all comfort, joy, and felicity in consequence of his effectual benediction. 'Having' (so the Apostle to the Hebrews admonisheth us) 'a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.'

In short, if Jesus be Christ, let us be Christians; Christians, not only in name, in outward profession, in speculation and opinion, but in very deed and reality, in our heart and affection, in all our conversation and practice. 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ' (that is, who confesseth Jesus to be Christ, and himself to be his follower) 'depart from iniquity.'

'Now the God of peace, that brought from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.' Amen.

SUMMARY OF SERMON XXI.

JOHN, CHAP. I.—VERSE 14.

THAT *Jesus Christ our Lord* is *the only Son of God*, that is, the Son of God in a peculiar and high manner, &c. St. John here affirms; and this is a great point of Christian doctrine, and a special object of our faith. It is now proposed to show the truth of this, and to explain how it is to be understood.

I. That the Messias was to be in an especial manner the Son of God, even the ancient prophets did foretel and presignify. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, saith God of him in the second Psalm. This relation shown to be expressed and intimated in many other parts of the ancient Scriptures, wherein are many epithets applied to it, importing peculiar eminency in its kind. The relation, in a large sense, and equivocally, is attributed to several: as to *Adam*, to *the angels*, to *God's peculiar people*, and sometimes to *all people*; but to these in a manner inferior and in an improper sense: for Christ is the *only Son of God*. The difference between these two cases stated.

1. Christ is called the *Son of God* in regard to his *temporal generation*, being born of the Holy Ghost: this explained. 2. In regard to his *resurrection* by divine efficacy; that being a kind of *generation*. 3. He is capable of this title by reason of that *high office*, in which by God's especial designation he was instated: this explained. 4. Whereas also it is said that God did appoint our Saviour *heir of all things*, did *put all things under his feet*, did *commit unto him all authority in heaven and earth*, &c.; in these and such other respects is he

properly or fitly called the *Son of God*, with some peculiarity and eminency above all others: but his being with such emphasis called *God's only begotten Son*, imports a more excellent ground than any of the preceding.

Reasons given why neither the *temporal generation*, nor the *resurrectional* one, nor the free *collation of power* and *dignity*, nor the *heirship* of all things, nor all the glorious *prerogatives* appropriated to Christ, &c. can account for this peculiar relationship, and the expressions by which it is denoted.

We must search for a better ground of this peculiar *Sonship* in the testimonies of holy Scripture; whence it is evident,

1. That our Saviour had in himself somewhat more than human, according to which he is said to have existed before his temporal generation here among men. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven*, &c. This head enlarged on.

2. And this pre-existence was necessary, since God by him made the world. *God*, saith St. Paul, *created all things by Jesus Christ*, &c.

3. He did indeed exist from all eternity; for he is called absolutely, *the Beginning*, which excludes all time previous to his existence: he is styled *the first-born of every creature*; or rather, as it ought to stand, *born before all the creation*: this head enlarged on.

4. From what has been said, it follows that his being was absolutely divine. If he was no creature, if author of all creatures, if eternally subsistent, then assuredly he is God; such state, action, and property being incommunicably peculiar to God. Many instances quoted from Scripture, wherein he is expressly designated as God. In many others the same is intimated. And seeing that holy Scripture is so cautious against inculcating the belief of more gods than one, how can we reconcile these things, unless we acknowlege our Saviour to be God?

That he is truly so, we may farther show. From other appellations peculiar to God, applied to him; as that of *Jehovah, Lord, Lord of Lords,* and *King of Kings,* &c.: this head enlarged on.

Also from the divinest attributes of God, in the most absolute manner and perfect degree, assigned to him; *eternity* as already shown; *immensity of presence and power; the wisdom of God,* and *the power of God,* &c.

The divine attributes he also expresses by divinest operations and works ascribed unto him; by the work of *creation;* that of *sustaining* and *preserving* things in being; that of performing *miracles,* &c.: this topic dilated on.

Now all this state and majesty, all these glorious titles, attributes, and works, can we imagine that he *whose name is Jealous,* (Exod. xxiv. 14.) who *will not give his glory to another,* (Is. xlii. 8.) would communicate them, or suffer them to be ascribed to a mere creature? &c. Our Saviour therefore, when he assumes them, is truly God.

II. Now since the whole tenor of our religion asserts the unity of God, our Saviour, being God, must of necessity partake of the same individual essence with God his Father: this explained and enlarged on.

Yet hath he not this essence from himself, but by communication. He is not first in order, but is *the image of the invisible God, the character,* or exact impression of his substance. He is the internal Word or Mind of God, which resembles him, and yet is not different from him: he is the *life,* the *wisdom,* and the *power* of God; which terms denote intrinsic and perfect unity: this point enlarged on and illustrated. Some practical applications of the point.

1. We may hereby learn whence the performances and sufferings of Christ become of so high worth and so great efficacy, &c.

2. What reverence and adoration is due from us to our

Saviour, and why we *must honor the Son even as we honor the Father*, &c.

3. We may hence perceive the infinite goodness of God towards us, and our correspondent obligation to thankfulness and love towards him, &c.

4. This consideration may fitly serve to beget in us hope and confidence in God on all occasions of need and distress.

5. St. John applies it also to the begetting charity in us towards our brethren. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

6. It may also remind us of the dignity of our nature and condition; and how in this respect we ought to behave ourselves.

7. This consideration greatly aggravates all impiety and sin: this shown.

8. Lastly, it may serve to beget in us a high esteem of the evangelical dispensation, and a hearty submission to its doctrines and precepts. Conclusion.

His only Son, &c.

SERMON XXI.

JOHN, CHAP. I.—VERSE 14.

And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

THAT Jesus Christ our Lord is the μονογενὴς, the only Son of God, that is, the Son of God in a peculiar and high manner, otherwise far than any creature can be so termed, St. John doth here (and in several other places) suppose, or assert plainly; and it is a great point of the Christian doctrine, a special object of our faith. To show the truth of which, to explain how it is to be understood, and to apply the consideration thereof to our practice, shall be the subject and scope of our present discourse.

I. That the Messias, designed by God to come into the world for the restoring and reconciling mankind unto God, was in an especial manner to be the Son of God, even the ancient prophets did foretel and presignify; 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' saith God of him in the second Psalm. And of him, that which in the first less perfect sense was spoken to King Solomon, (who as the son and heir of David, as the builder of God's house, as a prince of peace, reigning in great glory, wealth, and prosperity; as endued with incomparable wisdom, did most signally represent and prefigure him,) was chiefly intended for him, and did more exactly agree to him; 'He shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever:' and again; 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation;' 'Also I will make him

my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.' And accordingly it was, even before our Saviour's appearance, a persuasion commonly passing among the Jews, (both learned and unlearned,) that the Messias should be the Son of God; as may be collected from several passages in the New Testament; in which being the Christ and being the Son of God are conjoined as inseparable adjuncts, whereof one did imply the other, according to the sense then current, and previous to the embracing our Lord's doctrine. For Nathanael, we see, was no sooner persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, but he (according to his anticipation, common to the people) confesseth thus; 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; Rabbi, thou art the King of Israel.' Martha in like manner being moved to declare her faith concerning Jesus, expresseth it thus; 'Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world:' and likewise doth St. Peter, in the name of all his brethren, the Apostles; 'We have believed, and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' St. John the Baptist also doth thus express his belief and yield his testimony concerning Jesus; 'And I said, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.' Yea even the high priest himself implied the same, when examining our Lord he said, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' 'I adjure thee by the living God, tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God:' supposing that to be the Christ and to be the Son of God would concur in the same person. Yea, the devils themselves had learned this, who cried out, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?'

Thus did the ancient Scriptures intimate, and thus were God's people generally persuaded about the Messias; and that he is indeed the Son of God, the evangelical Scripture doth every where teach us, calling him not only at large the Son of God, but more emphatically the *ἀγαπητὸς*, ('the darling Son of God;') the *υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπης*, 'Son of God's love;' the *υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς*, 'God's true Son,' (that is, such most properly, in a most excellent manner incomparably representing and resembling God;) the *ἴδιος υἱὸς*, (God's proper, or peculiar Son;) the *πρωτοτόκος*, 'God's first-born;' God's *υἱὸς μονογενὴς*, 'his only begotten Son:' all which epithets import somewhat of

peculiar eminency in the kind and ground of this his relation unto God. The relation itself in a large sense, and equivocally, is attributed to several: Adam is called the son of God; and the angels are usually entitled such; and princes are styled 'the children of the Most High;' and all men are said to be God's offspring, and good men are especially dignified with that appellation; God's people, as such, (the Israelites of old, and Christians now,) are the children of God; yea, God is the Father of all things, as the maker and preserver of them: but all these, in comparison to Christ, are such in a manner very inferior, and in a very improper sense; for he is the only Son of God: which denotes a relation in its kind singular and incomparable; from which all other things are excluded.

Now that we may discern the difference, let us consider the grounds and respects on which this relation of our Saviour to God is built, or the reasons why he is called the Son of God: there are several expressed or implied in Scripture.

1. Christ is called the Son of God in regard to his temporal generation, as being in a manner extraordinary conceived in the Blessed Virgin by the Holy Ghost; so the angel expressly telleth us: 'The Holy Ghost shall come on thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God:' so the Apostle also; 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman,' (or born of a woman, *γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικὸς—γεννώμενον* in some copies:) a generation so peculiar and wonderful, without intervention of any father but God himself, is one ground of this relation and title; he therein excelling the common sort of men.

2. Christ also may be termed the Son of God in regard to his resurrection by divine efficacy; that being a kind of generation or introduction into another state of life immortal. Others are on this ground called the sons of God; 'They,' saith our Saviour, 'who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead—can die no more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, (*υἱοί εἰσι τοῦ Θεοῦ,*) being sons of the resurrection.' How much more then may he be thence so named, who is 'the first-fruits of

them that sleep,' and 'the first-born from the dead?' especially since that of the Psalmist, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee,' was, (according to St. Paul's exposition) verified in the raising him. In this respect Christ also did much excel all others, who on the same ground are called the sons of God.

3. Christ is capable of this title by reason of that high office, in which by God's especial designation he was instated. If ordinary princes and judges (as being deputed by God to represent himself in the dispensation of justice, or as resembling God in the exercise of their power and authority) have been called the children of the Most High in the language of holy Scripture; with how much greater truth and reason may he be called so, who was most signally consecrated and commissionated to the most eminent function that ever was or could be; who did whatever he did in God's name, who represented and resembled God so exactly? It is his own argumentation and inference; 'If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?' That extraordinary sanctification and mission did render him worthy and capable of that appellation, far beyond all others, who have for the like reason obtained it.

4. Whereas also it is said that God did appoint or constitute our Saviour heir of all things; did give him head above all things to the church, and did put all things under his feet; did give him power over all flesh; did commit unto him all authority in heaven and earth; did exalt him to the highest place of dignity and authority next to himself, at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest; yea did place him on his own throne and tribunal in his room, so that 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son;' well may he in that respect be entitled the Son of God; as thereby holding the rank and privilege suitable to such a relation; he being the Chief of the family, and next in order to the great Paterfamilias of heaven and earth. 'Of him,' saith St. Paul, 'all the family in heaven and earth is named:' 'Moses verily,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'was faithful in all his house

as a servant, but Christ as a Son over his own house:' and, 'Being made so much better than the angels,' saith the same Apostle, 'as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they,' (they being only called servants, or ministers; he being entitled a Son and heir.)

In these respects is our Saviour properly, or may be fitly, denominated the Son of God, with some peculiarity and excellency beyond others: but his being with such emphasis called God's only begotten Son, (denoting an exclusion of all others from this relation on the same kind of ground,) doth surely import a more excellent ground thereof, than any of these mentioned. For the first Adam did also immediately receive his being from the power and inspiration of God, (God formed his body and breathed a soul into it.) And Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist had also a generation extraordinary and miraculous, as being born of parents mortified by age and unapt for generation, by interposition of the divine power, (so it is expressly said of Sarah, *δύναμιν ἔλαβεν εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος*, 'she received power from God for conception of seed;') which productions do not so greatly differ from the production of Christ as man.

And how can we conceive that the production of angels should be so much inferior to our Saviour's temporal generation, if there were no other but that?

And although our Saviour was the first and chief, yet was he not the only Son of the resurrection; There were, as the Apostle to the Hebrews saith, many sons of this kind brought to glory; and Christ was 'firstborn among many brethren;' this is also a ground not proper or perspicuous enough for such a denomination; and indeed before it came to pass, he was called God's Son; he was so when he lived, he was so when 'God so loved the world, that he gave him for its salvation.'

Neither doth the free collation of power and dignity, how eminent soever, well suffice to ground this singularity of relation; for we see others also in regard to their designment and deputation to offices of power and dignity, although indeed subordinate and inferior to those he received, to be entitled the sons of God; and however this is rather the foundation of a metaphorical, than of a natural and proper sonship, which is

too slender and insufficient for him, who in the most solemn and august strain is denominated such.

Likewise although our Saviour be the heir of all things, yet hath he co-heirs, whom 'God hath,' as St. Paul speaketh, 'together enlivened, and together raised, and together seated with him' in thrones of glory and bliss; beside that privileges of this kind are rather consecutive and declarative of this his relation to God, than formerly constitutive thereof: 'If a son, then an heir,' saith St. Paul; inheritance follows sonship, and declares it, rather than properly makes it.

Moreover those prerogatives of singular affection and favor appropriated to Christ, together with all those glorious preferments consequent on them, do also argue some higher ground of this relation: for how could it be, that merely on account of that temporal generation, (which did only make him a man, 'of like passions and infirmities to us, sin only excepted,') or in respect to any thing consequent thereon, God should affect him with so special a dearness, and advance him to dignities so superlative, *ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς, καὶ ἐξουσίας, καὶ δυνάμεως, καὶ κυριότητος*, 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named;' 'angels and authorities and powers being,' as St. Peter says, 'made subject unto him?' Such proceedings (that generation only, or any thing resulting from it, being supposed) do not seem consistent with that decent congruity and natural equity, which God is ever wont to observe in his regard to persons and in his ordering of things.

We must therefore search for a more excellent and more proper ground of this magnificent relation, or peculiar sonship; and such an one we shall find clearly deducible from testimonies of holy Scripture, (and by several steps of discourse we shall deduce it.)

1. It is thence first evident that our Saviour had in him somewhat more than human, according to which he is said to have existed before his temporal generation here among men. Even as men after death are in regard to a surviving part of them, their immortal soul, said to be and live; for, even then, saith our Lord, 'all men do live to God.' For, before his birth here, he is said to have been in heaven, and to have descended

thence; 'No man,' saith he, 'hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven:' even when he visibly lived here, he was (as himself affirms) *secundum aliquid sui*, according to somewhat invisible in him, then actually in heaven; and according to that somewhat he was before in heaven; and by union of that invisible being to human visible nature, he is said to have descended from heaven. His ascension into heaven was but a translation of the human nature thither, where according to a more excellent nature he did abide before the incarnation; for, 'What,' saith he again, 'if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' from hence he is declared worthy and capable of so transcendent preferments: for, 'He that cometh from above, out of heaven, is above all things;' because, 'The second man is the Lord from heaven.' He, as to his manifestation in the flesh, was junior to St. John the Baptist, but in truth was of more ancient standing, and thence was to be preferred before him, as St. John himself perceived and professed; 'He that,' said St. John, 'comes after me is preferred before me, because he was before me.' He did subsist even before Abraham was born, whence without absurdity he could affirm that he and Abraham had interviews and intercourse together; so he discoursed with the Jews; 'Thou art not,' said they, 'yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?' he replied; 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am:' this saying did seem very absurd to them, and so offended them, that they took up stones to cast at him; not apprehending the mystery couched in his words, and that he had another nature, different from that which appeared to them, according to which that saying of his was verified. Yea farther he had a subsistence and a glory before the world had a being; for thus he prays; 'And now, Father, glorify me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;' glory (that is, a most honorable state of being, and excellent perfection) was not only destinated to him, but he really had it, and enjoyed it with God, before the world was.

2. Necessary indeed it was, that he should exist before the world, for that, secondly, God by him made the world, and for that he made the world himself; 'God,' saith St. Paul, 'cre-

ated all things by Jesus Christ;' and, 'By him,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'God made the worlds;' (or the ages, *τοὺς αἰῶνας*, that is, all things which ever at any time did subsist; those very ages, which the same Apostle saith 'we believe to have been framed by the word of God.') 'By him,' saith St. John in the beginning of his gospel, 'were all things made, and without him was nothing made that was made;' *δι' αὐτοῦ*, that is, by him, not *δι' αὐτὸν*, *for him* only: to exclude that ungrammatical misinterpretation, St. Paul joineth both those notions together; *τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται*, 'All things,' saith he, 'were made by him, and for him:' as also to prevent any restriction or exception of matters created by him, he particularly reckoneth what things were made by him; 'By him,' saith St. Paul, 'were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him:' he was not only (as some heterodox interpreters would expound it) to create a new moral and figurative world; he should not only restore and reform mankind, but he of old did truly and properly give being to all things; and among those things he even created angels, all things in heaven; beings unto which that metaphorical creation of men here doth not extend or anywise appertain: he therefore consequently, as St. Paul subjoins, *ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων*, 'doth exist before all things;' as the cause must necessarily in nature precede the effect.

3. He did indeed (to ascend yet higher, even to the top) exist from all eternity: for he is called absolutely *ἀρχή*, the beginning, which excludes all time previous to his existence; he is styled *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, 'the firstborn of every creature;' (or rather born before all the creation, as *πρῶτός μου ἦν* signifies, 'he was before me,' in St. John.) He is the Word, which was in the beginning; that is, before any time conceivable, and consequently from eternity. He is called the eternal life; 'The life (saith St. John in his first Epistle; the life, that is, another name frequently attributed to Christ, especially by that Apostle; the life) was manifested, and we did see it; and we bear witness, and show that eternal life, which was with the Father' (*ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν*, 'the Word was

with God;' and ἡ ζωὴ ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, 'the life was with the Father,' are, as I conceive, the same thing:) and more explicitly in the same Epistle; 'We are,' saith St. John, 'in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ; he is the true God, and the eternal life.' Hence is he frequently in the Apocalypse styled the first and the last, the beginning and the end; Alpha and Omega; 'he that was, and is, and is to come;' which phrases do commonly express the eternity and immortality proper to God; as in that of Isaiah; 'Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.' The same is signified by that elogy of the Apostle to the Hebrews; 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever,' (that is, who is eternally immutable;) that Apostle also implies the same, when he saith that Melchizedek represented and resembled the Son of God, as having μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν, μήτε ζωῆς τέλος, 'neither beginning of days nor end of life;' Melchizedek in a typical or mystical way, our Lord in a real and proper sense was such; beginningless and endless in his existence. And the prophet Micah seems to have taught the same, saying of him, (of him that should come out of Bethlehem, to be ruler in Israel,) that 'his goings forth have been from old, even from everlasting;' (or, from the days of eternity.) His eternity is however necessarily deducible from that, which is by St. John, St. Paul, and the Apostle to the Hebrews so plainly affirmed of him, that he made the world, that he made the ages, that he made all things; for if he made the world, he was before the foundations of the world, which phrase denotes eternity; if he made the ages, he must be before all ages; if all things were made by him, and nothing can make itself, then necessarily he was unmade; and being unmade, he necessarily must be eternal; for what at any time did not exist, can never without being made come to exist. His eternity also may be strongly inferred from his being called the word, the wisdom, and the power of God; for if he were not eternal, ἦν ἄρα καιρὸς, ὅτε χωρὶς τούτων ἦν ὁ Θεὸς, 'there was a time when God wanted these;'* when he was without mental

* In decret. Conc. Nic. pag. 276.

speech, or understanding; when he was not wise, when he was not powerful; as St. Athanasius argues. It therefore doth with sufficient evidence appear from Scripture, that our Saviour had a being before his temporal birth, and that before all creatures, yea even from eternity. Farthermore,

4. From what hath been said, it follows that his being was absolutely divine. If he was no creature, if author of all creatures, if eternally subsistent, then assuredly he is God; that state, that action, that property are incommunicably peculiar unto God. Only God is ὁ ὤν, being of himself originally and independently; only God is the creator of all things, ('He that made all things is God,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews;) 'only God hath immortality,' (or eternity,) saith St. Paul; no epithet or attribute is more proper to God than that, αἰώνιος Θεὸς, 'God eternal.' Hence is our Lord said by St. Paul, before he did assume the form of a servant, and became like unto men, to have 'subsisted in the form of God, not deeming it robbery to be equal to God,' (or to have a subsistence in duration and perfection equal to God;) so that as he was after his incarnation truly man, partaker of human nature, affections, and properties; so before it he was truly God, partaking the divine essence and attributes. Thence is he often in the Scriptures absolutely and directly named God; God in the most proper and most high sense; 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' saith St. John in the beginning of his gospel, (the place where he is most likely to speak with the least ambiguity or darkness;) the same Word, which was in time 'made flesh,' and dwelt among us,' did before all time exist with God, and was God. 'God,' saith St. Paul, 'was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, assumed up into glory:' of which propositions it is evident that Christ is the subject, and by consequence he is there named God. God is also by St. Paul said to have 'purchased the church with his own blood;' who did that, but he that also was man, even 'the man Christ Jesus?' St. Thomas on his conviction of our Saviour's resurrection did express his faith on him by crying out, 'My Lord and my God;' which acknowlegement our Saviour accepted and

approved as a proper testimony of that faith; ('He permits him to say it, or rather he accepts it, not hindering him,' saith St. Athanasius.) St. Paul calls the coming of our Lord at the resurrection 'the appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' To the Son (as the Apostle to the Hebrews interpreteth it) it was said in the psalm, (Psal. xlv. 7.) 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.' 'We are,' saith St. John, 'in the true one, in his son Jesus Christ; this he (οὗτος) is the true God, and life eternal;' no false, no metaphorical, no temporary God, but the very true God, the supreme eternal God. 'Out of whom,' (saith St. Paul, recounting the privileges of the Jewish nation,) 'as concerning the flesh,' (or according to his humanity,) 'Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever;' ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεὸς, the God over all; the sovereign God and Lord of all things;* the Most High; God blessed for ever; the ὁ εὐλογητὸς, which is a characteristical title or special attribute of God in the style of the Scriptures, and according to the common use of the Jews. Yea even of old, Isaiah foretold 'of the child which should be born, of the son which should be given to us,' that 'his name should be called (that is, according to the Hebrew manner of speaking, that he should really be, or however that he truly should be called) 'the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.'

In these places more clearly and immediately, in many other places obliquely and according to fair consequence, in many more probably, our Saviour is called God, God absolutely without any interpretative restriction or diminution. And seeing the holy Scripture is so careful of yielding occasion to conceive more gods than one; seeing it is so strict in exacting the belief, worship, and obedience of one only God, absolutely such; may we not well infer with St. Irenæus, 'Now,' (saith he, speaking indeed concerning the God of the Old Testament, whom the Gnostics did not acknowlege to be the highest and best God, but in words applicable to the God of the New Testament, whom we adore; 'Now,' saith he) 'neither the

* Iren. iii. 6.

Lord, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the Apostles would ever have called any one definitively, or absolutely God, unless he were truly God:' and, 'Never,' saith he again, 'did the prophets or the Apostles name any other God, or call Lord, beside the true and only God.' *

That he is truly God, we might also from other appellations peculiar to God; from divinest attributes and divinest operations ascribed to him; from the worship and honor we are allowed and injoined to yield him, farther show; but these things (in compliance with the time and your patience) I shall omit.

Other appellations also peculiar unto the supreme God are assigned to him, as that most appropriate and incommunicable name Jehovah; (of which in the prophet Isaiah God himself says thus; 'I am the Lord, and there is none else:' and Moses; 'Jehovah our God is one Jehovah:' even this is attributed to him; for, 'This,' saith Jeremiah, 'is his name, whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness:' and of St. John the Baptist it was by Malachi foretold that he should 'prepare the way of Jehovah.' The name Lord (answering to Jehovah) is both absolutely and with most excellent adjuncts commonly given him; 'The second man,' saith St. Paul, 'is the Lord from heaven;' The Lord of all things he is called by the same Apostle; and, 'the one, or only Lord:' 'To us,' saith he, 'there is one Lord, by whom are all things:' and, the Lord of glory, or most glorious Lord; ('If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:') and, 'The Lord of lords, and King of kings,' he is called in St. John's Revelation, ('They shall,' saith he, 'war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings:') we are also by precept injoined, and by exemplary practice authorised, to render unto our Saviour that honor and worship, which are proper and due to the only supreme God: for, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' is the great law of true religion: 'It is only belonging to God,' as St. Athanasius †

* Iren. iii. 6. † Athan. in Ar. Or. iii. p. 394.

speaks, to be worshipped; a creature must not worship a creature, but a servant his Lord, and a creature its God.' And,* 'They who call a creature Lord, and worship him as a creature, how,' saith he, 'do they differ from the heathen?' But of him it is said, 'Let all the angels of God worship him;' of him myriads of angels say, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing: yea all creatures in heaven and earth, and under the earth,' resound the same acclamation, saying; 'To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the worship, and the praise for ever. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Hence the throne of God the Father and of his Son are one and the same; 'The throne of God, and of the Lamb, are in it,' saith St. John, speaking of the heavenly city; 'For the Son,' saith that great Father, 'reigning with the same royalty of his Father, is seated on the same throne with his Father.' To invocate the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is a practice characterising and distinguishing Christians from infidels; as when St. Paul inscribes his epistle to the church of Corinth, 'together with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place;' and when Saul is said to 'have authority from the chief priests to bind all that called on his name,' so that we need not to allege the single example of St. Stephen invoking our Lord. Indeed himself informs us that 'the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.' To wish and pray for grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ' is the usual practice of the Apostles, and to dispense them is a prerogative of his, common to him with God his Father. To have the same Holy Spirit as the Father unmeasurably, and to send it from himself, with commissions and instructions, and to communicate it freely, are especial characters of supreme divinity, and much transcending any creature, as St. Athanasius observes;† 'With

* Ath. Or. i. in Ar. p. 296. † Ibid. iii. in Ar. p. 366.

authority,' saith he, 'to give the Spirit doth not suit a creature, or a thing made, but is an endowment of God.' Whereas also we are often severely prohibited from relying or confiding on any man or any creature, (as in that of the prophet; 'Cursed be the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm;') we are yet allowed, yea we are obliged, to repose our trust and confidence in Christ; 'Ye trust in God,' saith he himself to his disciples, 'trust also in me;' whence St. Paul calleth him emphatically our hope, in his compellation to Timothy; 'Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope;' which is the same title that Jeremiah attributes unto God; 'O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble.' Hence to him, jointly with God the Father, and the divine Spirit, that solemn benediction or prayer is directed; 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all;' as also a parity of highest adoration is then together with the same divine persons yielded to him, when we are baptised in his name, and consecrated to his service.

The divinest attributes of God are also in the most absolute manner and perfect degree assigned to him: eternity, as we discoursed before. Immensity of presence and power, then implied, when speaking with the Jews he told them that he was then in heaven; and when he promises his disciples, that 'he will be with them, whenever they meet in his name;' and also, 'that he will be with them, to the end of the world.' Infinite wisdom and knowlege; 'for in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowlege;' and, 'Now are we sure,' say the disciples to him in St. John, 'that thou knowest all things:' and, 'Lord,' saith St. Peter, 'thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee:' and St. Paul calls him the wisdom of God, and the power of God: wherefore since God's wisdom is omniscient, and his power omnipotent, so consequently is he. In short, whatever attribute or perfection God hath, the same hath he; for, 'All things,' saith he, 'that the Father hath, are mine.' What creature without high presumption could say those words concerning the divine Spirit; 'He

shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.'

The divine attributes he expresseth by divinest operations and works, which are ascribed to him. It is a most divine work to create; this we showed before to have been performed by him: to sustain, and conserve things in being, is another like work; this he doth; 'For he,' saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power;' and, 'By him,' saith St. Paul, 'all things consist.' To perform miracles, or do things surmounting the laws and thwarting the course of nature; such as by mere word and will rebuking winds and seas, curing diseases, ejecting devils, is the property of him, who, as the psalmist says, 'alone doeth great wonders.' Particularly to raise the dead is a prerogative reserved by God in his own hand; (for, 'The Lord killeth, and the Lord maketh alive;' 'he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.') This our Lord often did at his pleasure; for, 'As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will:' and of himself he saith in the Apocalypse; 'I have the keys of hell and of death.' Especially to raise himself, which he assumeth to himself; ('I,' saith he, 'lay down my life, that I may take it up again; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again:' and, 'Demolish this temple,' saith he again, 'and in three days I will rear it;' which it was impossible for him to do, and unintelligible how it should be done, otherwise than by the divinity resident in him. To be καρδιογνώστης, searching men's hearts and discerning their secret thoughts, is a peculiar work of him that saith, 'I the Lord try the heart, I search the reins;' and of our Lord it is said, 'He needed not that any should witness about a man, for he knew what was in man;' and by many experiments he declared this power. To foresee and foretell future contingencies to be peculiar to himself God signified, when in the Prophet he thus challenged the objects of heathen worship; 'Show the things to come, that we may know ye are gods;' this our Lord did on several occasions, particularly in the case of Judas's treason; 'He knew,' saith St. John, 'from the beginning, who they were who did not believe, and who it was that should betray him.' This, I say,

he did, not as the prophets, by particular arbitrary revelation, but immediately by his own Spirit; whereby even the prophets themselves were illustrated and inspired; for it was, as St. Peter says, 'The Spirit of Christ in them which testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow.' To see and know God, ('who inhabits inaccessible light') is beyond a creature's capacity and state, and yet belongs to him; 'None,' saith he, 'hath seen the Father, save he which is of God; he hath seen the Father:' and, 'None knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' To remit sins absolutely he denied not to be the property of God, when his adversaries thus objected it; 'Who can forgive sins except God only?' yet he assumed it to himself, and asserted it by a miracle. To save also God declared to be a peculiar work of his, when he said it, and reiterated it in Isaiah and in Hosea: 'I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour;' which act yet, and which title, are no less proper to our Lord. In fine, briefly, he claims to himself at once the performance of every divine work, when he saith, 'Whatsoever the Father doeth, that also doeth the Son likewise.'

Now all this state and majesty, all these glorious titles, attributes, and works, can we imagine that he 'whose name is Jealous,' as it is in Exodus xxxiv. 14. and 'who is jealous of his name,' as it is in Ezekiel xxxix. 25. who said it once and again in the prophet Isaiah, that 'he will not give his glory to another;' can we conceive, I say, that he should communicate them, or should suffer them to be ascribed to any mere creature, how eminent soever in nature or worth, how dear soever on any regard? for indeed the highest creature producible must be infinitely distant from him, infinitely inferior to him, infinitely base and mean in comparison to him, as to any true perfection or dignity; nor therefore can any creature be in nature capable of such names, such characters, such prerogatives; nor can in any reason or justice accept or bear them. Our Saviour therefore, unto whom by divine allowance and injunction they are attributed, who willingly admits them, who clearly assumes them to himself, is truly God.

II. Now the whole tenor of our religion (according to dic-

tates of Scripture most frequent and obvious) asserting the unity of God; our Saviour therefore, being God, must of necessity partake the same individual essence with God his Father; and it must be certainly true, which he affirmeth concerning himself; 'I and the Father are one,' (ἕν ἐσμεν, are the same thing, or one in nature; not εἷς ἐσμὲν, the same in person, or manner of subsistence;) and what he again saith; 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;' and, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me;' by the divine essence common to both.

Yet hath he not this essence from himself, but by communication; for, 'As the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given the Son to have life in himself.' And ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, he that is, or hath his essence, from God, is the periphrasis he gives of himself. He is not first in order, as an original, but is 'the image of the invisible God,' (an image indeed most adequate and perfectly like, as having the very same nature and essence.) He is ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, ('the effulgency of his Father's glory,') and χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως, the character, or exact impression, of his substance. He is the internal word, or mind of God, which resembles him, and yet is not different from him: he is the life, the wisdom, the power of God; which terms denote the most intrinsic and perfect unity. So the Apostles, by the most apposite comparisons that nature affords, strive to adumbrate the ineffable manner of that eternal communication of the divine nature from God the Father to our Saviour; the which is that generation, whereon the relation, about which we speak, is founded; or, because of which our Lord is most truly and properly called, 'The only begotten Son of God.' For, if to produce a like in any kind or degree, be to generate; then to give a being without any dissimilitude or disparity is the most proper generation: our Saviour therefore hence truly is the Son of God the Father. And that he is so only, that no other beside him hath been ever thus begotten, is evident; for that as no reason of ours could have informed us that our Saviour himself was thus begotten, so no revelation hath showed us that any other hath been; and we therefore cannot without extreme temerity suppose it. We are sufficiently instructed that all other divine productions, together with the relations grounded on them, are different

from this; by creation things receive a being from God infinitely distant from, infinitely unequal and unlike to, the divine essence; and that filiation, or sonship, which doth stand on adoption and grace, is wholly in kind different from this. And the communication of the divine essence jointly from the Father and Son to the Holy Spirit, doth in manner (although the manner thereof be wholly incomprehensible to us) so differ from this, that in the Holy Scripture (the only guide of our conception, and of our speech in matters of this nature, far surpassing our reason) it is never called generation; and therefore we must not presume to think or call it so.

But let so much suffice for explication of the point; a point represented in Scripture so considerable, that the belief thereof (if it have that sincerity and that strength as to dispose our hearts to a due love and reverence of the Son of God, attended with, or attested to by, a faithful obedience to his laws) doth raise us also to the privilege of becoming the sons of God, and doth mystically unite us to him, and elevateth us above the world; so doth St. John teach us; 'To as many,' saith he, 'as received him,' (received him as the Son of God, or believed him to be so,) 'to them gave he the power (or the privilege) to become the sons of God:' and, 'Whosoever,' saith he, 'shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God:' and, 'Who,' saith he again, 'is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' of so great importance is the point. Of which I shall only now farther briefly propose some practical applications.

1. We may hence learn whence the performances and the sufferings of Christ become of so high worth and so great efficacy. 'Wonder not,' saith St. Cyril the Catechist,* 'if the whole world was redeemed; for it was not a bare man, but the only Son of God that died for it.' It is not so strange, that God's only Son's mediation should be so acceptable and so effectual with God; that the blood of God's dearest Son should be so precious in God's sight, that the intercession of one so near him should be so prevalent with him. What could God refuse to the Son of his love earnestly soliciting and suing in

* Cyrill. Catech. 13.

our behalf? what debts might not so rich a price discharge? what anger could not so noble a sacrifice appease? what justice could not so full a dispensation satisfy? 'We were not,' St. Peter telleth us, 'redeemed with corruptible things, with silver or gold,' (no; whole Indies of such stuff would not have been sufficient to ransom one soul;) 'but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' It was not, as the Apostle to the Hebrews remarketh, by the 'blood of goats and heifers,' that our sins were expiated, (no; whole hecatombs would have nothing availed to that purpose;) but 'by the blood of Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered up himself spotless unto God,' (who as the eternal Son of God did offer himself a sacrifice not to be blamed or refused.) 'It is,' as St. John saith, 'the blood of Christ, the Son of God, which purgeth us from all sin.' And well indeed might a Person so infinitely noble, worthy, and excellent, be a sufficient ransom for whole worlds of miserable offenders and captives. Well might his voluntary undergoing such inconveniences and infirmities of life, his suffering so disgraceful and painful a death, countervail the deserved punishment of all mankind; well might his so humble, so free, so perfect submission to God's will infinitely please God, and render him propitious to us. 'Well might,' as St. Athanasius speaks, 'the very appearing of such a Saviour in the flesh be a general ransom of sin, and become salvation to every creature:' the which St. Paul thus expresseth; 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:' for if our displeasing, injuring, and dishonoring him, who is so great and so good, doth aggravate our offence; the equal excellency and dignity of the Person, submitting in our behalf to the performance of all due obedience and all proper satisfaction, may proportionably advance the reparation offered, and compensate the wrong done to God. Well therefore may we believe, and say with comfort, after the Apostle; Τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν; 'Who shall criminate against the elect of God? it is God that justifieth, (it is the Son of God, it is God

* Athan. ad Adelph.

himself, who satisfies divine justice for us;) who is there that condemns? it is Christ that died.'

2. We may hence be informed what reverence and adoration is due from us to our Saviour, and why we 'must honor the Son, even as we honor the Father;' why even all the angels must worship him; why 'every thing in heaven, and earth, and beneath the earth must bend the knee (that is, must yield veneration and observance) to him;' why by all creatures whatever the same pre-eminence is to be ascribed, and the same adoration paid jointly and equally 'to God the Father Almighty, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb,' his blessed Son, who 'standeth at his right hand.' Such divine glory and worship we are obliged to yield him, because he is the Son of God, one in essence, and therefore equal in majesty with his Father: were it not so, it would be injury to God, and sacrilege to do it; God would not impart his glory, we should not attribute it unto another. So this consideration grounds our duty and justifies our practice of worshipping our Lord; it also encourages us to perform it with faith and hope; for thence we may be assured that he, being the Son of God omniscient, doth hear and mind us; being the Son of God omnipotent, he can thoroughly help and save us; being also, as such, absolutely and immensely good, he will be always disposed to afford what is good and convenient for us in our need.

3. We hence may perceive the infinite goodness of God toward us, and our correspondent obligation to love and thankfulness toward him. 'In this,' saith St. John, 'was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' 'In this,' adds he, 'is love, (love indeed, love admirable and inconceivable,) not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his only begotten Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' Can there be imagined any equal, any like expression of kindness, of mercy, of condescension, as for a prince, himself glorious and happy, most freely to deliver up, out from his own bosom, his own only most dearly beloved Son, to the suffering most base contumelies and most grievous pains for the welfare of his enemies, of rebels and traitors to him? even such hath been God's goodness to us; the Son of God, the heir of eternal majesty,

was by his Father sent down from heaven, (from the bosom of his glory and bliss,) to put on the form of a servant, to endure the inconveniences of this mortal state, to undergo the greatest indignities and sorrows; that we 'who were alienated, and enemies in our mind by wicked works, might be reconciled to God;' might be freed from wrath and misery; might be capable of everlasting life and salvation: suitable to such unexpressible goodness ought our gratitude to be toward God: what affectionate sense in our hearts, what thankful acknowlegements with our mouths, what dutiful observance in all our actions, doth so wonderful an instance of mercy and goodness deserve and require from us?

4. This consideration may fitly serve to beget in us hope and confidence to God on any occasions of need or distress; to support and comfort us in all our afflictions; for, 'He that so loved us, that he gave his only begotten Son for our salvation and happiness,' how can we ever suspect him as unwilling to bestow on us whatever else shall to his wisdom appear needful or convenient for us? He that out of pure charity and pity toward us did part with a jewel so inestimable, how can any thing seem much for him to give us? it is the consolatory discourse of St. Paul: 'He,' saith the Apostle, 'that did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' all things that we truly need, all things that we can reasonably desire, all things which are good and fit for us.

5. St. John applieth this consideration to the begetting charity in us toward our brethren. 'Beloved,' saith he, 'if God so loved us, (as to send his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him,) we ought also to love one another.' If God so lovingly gave up his only Son for our sakes, what, (in grateful regard to him, in observant imitation of him,) what expressions, I say, of charity and goodwill ought we to yield toward our brethren? what endeavors, what goods, what life of ours should seem too dear unto us for to expend or impart for their good? shall we be unwilling to take any pains or suffer any loss for them, for whom (together with ourselves) the Son of God hath undergone so much trouble, so much disgrace,

so much hardship? shall we, I say, be uncharitable, when the Son of God hath laid on us such an obligation, hath set before us such an example?

6. This consideration also may inform us, and should mind us, concerning the dignity of our nature and of our condition; and consequently how in respect to them we should behave ourselves. If God did so much consider and value man, as for his benefit to debase his only Son; if the Son of God himself hath deigned to assume our nature, and to advance it into a conjunction with the divine nature, then is man surely no inconsiderable or contemptible thing; then should we despise no man, whom God hath so regarded and so honored; then ought we not to neglect or slight ourselves: if we were worthy of God's so great care, we ought not to seem unworthy of our own. We ought to value ourselves, not so indeed as to be proud of so undeserved honor, but so as to be sensible thereof, and to suit our demeanor thereto. Reflecting on these things should make us to disdain to do any thing unworthy that high regard of God, and that honorable alliance unto him. It should breed in us noble thoughts, worthy desires, and all excellent dispositions of soul conformable to such relations: it should engage us unto a constant practice, beseeming them whom God hath so dignified, whom the Son of God hath vouchsafed to make his brethren: by affecting any thing mean or sordid, by doing any thing base or wicked, we greatly undervalue ourselves, we much disparage that glorious family into which, by the Son of God's incarnation, we are inserted. Ταύτης οὖν τῆς τιμῆς ἀξίαν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιδειξώμεθα, καὶ μηδὲν ἔχωμεν κοινὸν πρὸς τὴν γῆν. 'Let us therefore,' saith St. Chrysostom, 'show a philosophy worthy of this honor; having nothing common with this earth.' (In Joh. i. Hom. 18.)

7. This consideration doth much aggravate all impiety and sin. Wilful sin on this account appeareth not only disobedience to our Creator and natural Lord, but enormous offence against the infinite bounty and mercy and condescension of our Saviour; a most heinous abusing the Son of God, who came down into this homely and humble state on purpose 'to bless us, in turning every one of us from our iniquities;' to free us from the

grievous dominion and from the woful effects of sin; we thereby frustrate the most gracious intentions of God, and defeat the most admirable project that could be for our benefit and salvation: we thereby 'trample on the Son of God, recrucify him, and put him to an open shame;' so the Apostle to the Hebrews telleth us, implying the heinous guilt and sad consequence of doing so; 'He,' saith the Apostle, 'that despised Moses's law died without mercy;—Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?'

8. Lastly, this consideration may serve to beget in us a high esteem of the dispensation evangelical, and hearty submission thereto. Almighty God, (as is signified in the parable,) after several provisions for the good of mankind, and several messages from heaven to the world here, did at last send his Son with this expectation; 'Surely they will reverence my Son:' and surely much reason he had to expect the greatest reverence to be yielded to his person; the readiest credence and obedience to his word. For if any declaration of God concerning his will, or our duty, however proceeding from him, (either by dictate of natural reason, or by the instruction of prophets, or by the ministry of angels,) ought to be entertained with great respect and observance; much more should the overtures of greatest mercy and favor exhibited by his own Son (on purpose sent unto us to discover them) be embraced with highest regard, and humblest reverence, and most hearty compliance. It is the Apostle to the Hebrews his discourse and inference; 'Therefore,' (saith he, therefore, because 'God hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son,') 'we ought *περισσοτέρως προσέχειν*, to give more (abundant, or more) earnest heed to the things which we have heard;' 'for,' subjoins he, 'how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by (our) Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?' *Ταῦτ' οὖν διηνεκῶς στρέφοντες, καὶ ἀναλογιζόμενοι ἐκκαθάρωμεν ἡμῶν τὸν βίον, καὶ λαμπρὸν ποιήσωμεν*, 'Continually therefore revolving and recounting these things, let

us cleanse our life, and make it bright:' so we conclude with good St. Chrysostom.

'Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature on him; grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by the Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end.' Amen.

END OF VOL. V.

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